

Whence and Whither

A Narrative Perspective on Birth ἄνωθεν (John 3,3-8)(*)

In John 3,8 birth ἄνωθεν is illustrated by means of the wind. Its effects can be experienced without knowledge of from whence it comes and whither it goes (οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει). This proverbial analogy, drawing on ordinary experience, asserts the reality of the wind as well as its mysterious nature. John 3,8 is not, however, exhausted by this analogy⁽¹⁾. The significance of the whence and whither of the wind will become clear as the story progresses. It merits attention as the entire story in this Gospel is unfolded. The enigmatic identity of Jesus forms a subtext of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, and particularly so in John 3,3-8. Wayne A. Meeks sees the language of the descent and ascent, to which the whence and whither of Jesus naturally belongs, as having already been introduced in Jesus' response to Nicodemus in John 3,8⁽²⁾. This observation is substantiated and furthered in the present article. The nature of faith is here explored by reference to the language by which Jesus' identity with the Father in heaven is expressed in this literature.

The story guides the readers from Nicodemus' misunderstanding to the proper understanding of birth ἄνωθεν. As John 3 unfolds, the emphasis will be on the concept "from above" (3,31 cf. 1,12-13)⁽³⁾.

(*) I owe thanks to Craig R. Koester for valuable and helpful criticism on a first draft of this article.

(¹) Thus also P. JULIAN, *Jesus and Nicodemus. A Literary and Narrative Exegesis of Jn. 2,23–3,36* (European University Studies, Series XXIII Theology 711; Frankfurt am Main etc., 2000) 66, but he does not elaborate this.

(²) For the importance of the descent and ascent of Jesus, see W.A. MEEKS, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism", *JBL* 91 (1972) 44-72, esp. 60-63; G.C. NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure. The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (SBLDS 63; Chico, CA 1983) 10-12, 21-23.

(³) The replacement of "born ἄνωθεν" by "born of water and Spirit" militates against the meaning "born again", since "born of water and Spirit" implies more than a second physical birth. Thus also T.G. BROWN, *Spirit in the Writings of John* (JSNTSS 253; London – New York 2003) 119. From a narrative perspective the question of baptism has been overemphasized in the exegesis of birth ἄνωθεν; see e.g. O. HOFIUS, "Das Wunder der Wiedergeburt. Jesu Gespräch mit Nicodemus Joh 3,1-21", *Johannesstudien. Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (eds. O. HOFIUS – H-C. KAMMLER) (Tübingen 1996) 33-80, esp. 41-43. OT expectations of spiritual renewal in terms of water and Spirit (e.g. Ezek

Furthermore, the full meaning of birth from above is progressively elucidated as the Christological significance of whence and whither is developed in the story. Jesus' whence and whither is part of the contrast between "above and below" in the Fourth Gospel. This is also a fundamental structure of what Jesus says about birth *ἄνωθεν*. John applies terms which elsewhere describe the mysterious origin of Jesus in order to explore the nature of faith. This is in accordance with the epistemological conviction at work in John 3,3-8, namely "like is known by like": "What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (NRSV)⁽⁴⁾. This article reads John 3,3-8 in the light of the whole narrative as well as this epistemological conviction.

1. *The Dialogue with Nicodemus: An Epistemological Setting*

In the Prologue a pattern of knowledge/failure to know stands out. This pattern is expressed also in terms of acceptance/rejection or faith/denial. Cognitive terms abound in the prologue and the initial chapters of John's story. According to John 1,10 "the world did not know him". The believers, who are presented as born of God, saw his glory (1,14). The prologue closes by a statement inspired by the Old Testament claim that human beings cannot see God Himself. However, God was made known by Christ (1,18). This closing adds to the epistemological nature of the prologue, and is thereby also a reminder that epistemology is important to the entire story. The prologue tells us that true knowledge of God and Christ sets the agenda for the story told in the subsequent chapters.

The motifs of knowing/making known/not knowing permeate the text about the Jews coming to John the Baptist (1,19-28), most directly expressed in μέσος ὑμῶν στήκει ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε (v. 26). In his testimony, the Baptist says that he also did not know (vv. 31.33), but that he had come to see⁽⁵⁾ (v. 34 cf. v. 32). The whole purpose of his

36,25-27; Zech 13,1; Joel 3,1-2) accord with the narrative itself. In a narrative perspective it hardly makes sense for Jesus to blame Nicodemus for not understanding a rite that never appears in the story.

⁽⁴⁾ Few commentaries pay attention to this principle; see, however, C. TALBERT, *Reading John. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York 1994) 77, 98. Cf. B.E. GÄRTNER, "The Pauline and Johannine Idea of 'To Know God' Against the Hellenistic Background", *NTS* 14 (1967-8) 209-231 and W.C. GREASE, "'Unless One is Born Again': The Use of a Heavenly Journey in John 3", *JBL* 107 (1988) 677-693.

⁽⁵⁾ Since ἐώρακα is here used without an accusative, it takes on the meaning of "I have come to understand".

ministry was to reveal Jesus to Israel (v. 31). The story about Jesus calling disciples (1,35-51) closes as follows: "...you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (v. 51). This closing is prepared for by references in the immediate context to "seeing", "finding" and "believing" the Messiah. V. 51 makes an explicit reference to Jacob's theophany in Gen 28,12. All disciples are promised a vision like Jacob's. They will thereby truly become Israelites like Nathanael (v. 47). In the light of Philo's well-known etymological explanation of the meaning of Israel (Gen 32,28-30) as "the one who sees God"⁽⁶⁾, the epistemological interest of John's text becomes even more apparent.

Jesus revealed his glory in Cana, and the disciples believed in him (John 2,11). The narrator makes this comment on the incident and thus turns it into a story about knowing Jesus and his ministry. The steward is caught by surprise when he tastes the wine (οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν); his statement echoes what Jesus in John 3,8 says about the person who is born ἄνωθεν. As with the wind, human knowledge cannot understand the mystery; it can only experience it. This illustration thus puts epistemology at the centre of the text. Twice in chapter 2 (vv. 17,22), true knowledge is connected with Scripture.

From this it follows that a teacher of Israel, like Nicodemus, is supposed to have proper knowledge. But his knowledge seems to stop at acknowledging Jesus as "a teacher come from God" (John 3,2). This knowledge falls short of the truth because Nicodemus fails to see that Jesus is from above. Three times in vv. 3-8 Nicodemus asks questions making him as an outsider to the true knowledge of Jesus and his ministry. Jesus says to him: ταῦτα οὐ γινώσκεις; (v. 10). This is contrasted with v. 11, where the knowledge of the insiders is emphasized. V. 2 introduces the question of knowledge at the outset of this narrative. This is pointed out by Neyrey⁽⁷⁾, who draws attention to the fact that Nicodemus' statement ("we know...") in v. 2 is challenged by Jesus' response in v. 3 ("unless..."). Nicodemus' claim to know is replaced by his questions to Jesus.

As the dialogue in chap. 3 proceeds, the question of knowledge develops into "entering" the Kingdom of God, "believing" in the Son

(6) For Philo references, see J.H. NEYREY, "The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51", *CBQ* 44 (1982) 586-605, esp. 592, n. 30.

(7) J.H. NEYREY, "John III – A Debate over Johannine Epistemology and Christology", *NT* 23 (1981) 115-127. See also C.S. KEENER, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Peabody, MA 2003) I, 234-247.

of Man, “loving” and “coming to the light”. This might disturb the epistemological picture given so far. However, in John’s Gospel all these terms, including “knowing”, are interrelated terms. Jesus’ last prayer in chap. 17 demonstrates this. At the beginning of this prayer, the knowledge of Jesus’ disciples is in focus (17,3.7-8), but “believing” (17,8.29) and “loving” (17,26) appear as well. In the same way, the dialogue with Nicodemus moves easily between knowing, believing and loving. The epistemological aspect of believing is clearly in focus in 3,12, where πιστεύω sums up both γινώσκω (v. 10) and λαμβάνω (v. 11): Here is a claim to have a faith that gives knowledge about things the teacher of Israel failed to understand.

Jesus emphasizes that proper knowledge is beyond the capacity of Nicodemus, as well as that of any human being (3,5-8). The two “unless ...” sentences (3, 5) make birth ἄνωθεν or birth of water and the Spirit a basic requirement. Nicodemus’ incapacity is given general relevance: “You must (δεῖ) be born ἄνωθεν” (v. 7)⁽⁸⁾. This requirement triggers Nicodemus’ question: “How can these things be” (v. 9), which was anticipated in v. 4. The entire dialogue sets out to respond to this.

John 3,3-8 emphasizes the contrast between flesh and Spirit, which implies that “like is known by like”. The “seeing” or “believing” that Jesus addresses cannot be apprehended by flesh. Flesh is restricted to flesh. Spirit, however, bridges heaven and earth and gives knowledge of heavenly things that the flesh cannot see. Spirit and birth ἄνωθεν thus correspond to each other. V. 13 claims that Jesus alone has access to heavenly secrets, because he has descended from heaven and ascended there as well (cf. 1,51). His whence and whither is entirely with God. A spiritual transformation, birth ἄνωθεν, gives the believer a heavenly origin like that of Jesus himself. What the heavenly origin is for Jesus, birth ἄνωθεν is for human beings. The contrast between flesh and Spirit is overcome by God’s love (3,16). Flesh is thus not understood in inimical terms.

The contrast between flesh and the Spirit occurs in 6,62-63 as well. The explicit issue is belief and unbelief, albeit the aspect of understanding might be present in the question “who can accept (ἀκούειν) it” (6,60). The Spirit gives life. Flesh is described as a contrast due to its futility; life does not and cannot spring from flesh. This does not imply that flesh knows flesh only, but that flesh must experience a transformation occasioned by the life-giving Spirit.

⁽⁸⁾ Δεῖ carries the meaning of divine necessity or plan; see e.g. John 3,14.30; 4,20; 20,9.

The literary context of 6,62-63 brings to mind the dialogue with Nicodemus. V. 62 echoes the whence and whither of Jesus, and v. 65 is a slightly altered quotation of 3,27.

John 1,18, the peak of the Prologue, paves the way for the principle of likeness. The Son alone could know God because He comes from God and is of the same nature. The unity between the Father and the Son in John's Gospel is, of course, in accordance with this principle⁽⁹⁾. In John 8,44-47 those who are ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ are contrasted with those who are not, and this is a difference in terms of understanding versus not understanding (ἄκούω cf. 19). John 11,10 addresses the contrast between darkness and light in a way that recalls traditional ways of illustrating the principle of likeness: Light can only be apprehended by light⁽¹⁰⁾. Understanding that Jesus' way to Jerusalem is aimed at bringing life from death is possible only for those who have the light within themselves. John 11,10 sheds some light on the epistemological nature of darkness versus light in the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. This contrast is clearly seen in 3,2.19-21. These passages do not, however, emphasize the light within, but Christ's role as the light. These two perspectives on the light are, however, integrated in John's Gospel. This is seen in the Prologue where vv. 9-10 in particular echoes 3,19. Jesus as the light implies also illumination of human beings. To ancient readers this was a term of epistemology, which is confirmed in its contrast in 1,10 ("...the world did not know him")⁽¹¹⁾. Furthermore, the contrast between darkness and light in the Prologue (1,9-13) which implies a contrast between man in himself and birth from God, fits the contrast between above and below in chap. 3.

When, in his examination of Jesus (John 18) Pilate asks "what is truth?", he raises an epistemological question. Jesus says that "everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (18,37), thus claiming that understanding truth requires a fundamental familiarity with it. The Johannine tradition in 1 John speaks in the same vein (3,1-3; 4,4. 6)⁽¹²⁾. To summarize so far, I concur with Jerome H. Neyrey who

⁽⁹⁾ See e.g. John 6,46; 10,38; 14,10.20; 17,21.

⁽¹⁰⁾ C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*. Meaning, Mystery, Community (Minneapolis 2003) 163 on this particular text: "The ability or inability to see depended not only on a person's external circumstances but on one's internal condition — one's belief or unbelief".

⁽¹¹⁾ See KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 148-149.

⁽¹²⁾ The principle of likeness is found elsewhere in the New Testament as well; e.g. Acts 17,27-28; 1 Cor 2,6-16; 15,50.

suggests that John 3 “contains a scrutiny of religious epistemology and Christology”⁽¹³⁾. To Neyrey, John 3 presents Jesus as the revealer of heavenly secrets. The importance of this observation is unquestionable, but vv. 3-8 address a related issue, namely the prerequisite for receiving such revelation. The Christological language of whence and whither is here applied directly (οὕτω ἐστίν) to the believer. The exegesis of the dialogue must account for the way Christological terminology occurs in the illustration of a person born ἄνωθεν (v. 8).

2. Like is known by like

We have seen that John 3,3-8 is embedded in an epistemological context in which likeness is foundational. This principle is by no means attested only in John’s Gospel; on the contrary it is found also elsewhere at key points in the New Testament⁽¹⁴⁾. John 3,3-8 has adopted an epistemological conviction of wide currency in Antiquity. It suffices to give some examples to demonstrate this. Sextus Empiricus (2.-3. century A.D.) may serve as a point of departure. In his work *Against the Professors*, he mentions the principle “like is known by like” (τοῖς ὁμοίοις τὰ ὅμοια γινώσκεσθαι) as fundamental to all knowledge. He calls this principle an old δόγμα handed down from Pythagoras, which is found in Plato⁽¹⁵⁾ but stated much earlier by Empedocles (fl. 477-432 B.C.). Sextus quotes Empedocles, who says that earth is “seen” by earth, water by water, air by air, fire by fire, love by love, and hate by hate⁽¹⁶⁾. This principle explains, according to

⁽¹³⁾ NEYREY, “John III – A Debate over Johannine Epistemology and Christology”, 115. See NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*, 104 who says that John 3,1-10 “revolves around the question of who Jesus is and what must happen before a person can adequately understand him”.

⁽¹⁴⁾ L.A. JARVIS, “Becoming like God through Christ: Discipleship in Romans”, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. R.N. LONGENECKER) (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge U.K. 1996) 143-162.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Sextus probably had in mind *Timaeus* 45B-D, where Plato says that “seeing” takes place through the principle of ὁμοιον πρὸς ὁμοιον, and *Protagoras* 337C-338A where he speaks metaphorically of the “sanctuary of wisdom” (τὸ πρυτανεῖον τῆς σοφίας) in which the wise men among the Greeks live since they know the nature of things which is τὸ ὁμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φύσει συγγενές ἐστίν.

⁽¹⁶⁾ This fragment was quite popular in Antiquity; see e.g. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1000b21; Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 6.11-12 (138.3-9). These references are taken from B. INWOOD, *The Poem of Empedocles. A Text and Translation with an Introduction* (Toronto – Buffalo – London 1992). He mentions an apophthegm attributed to Empedocles: “To the man who said, ‘I cannot find a wise man’,

Sextus, why Empedocles called himself a god; he kept his mind free from evil, and by the god within him (ὁ ἐν ἑαυτῷ θεός) he understood the god outside himself⁽¹⁷⁾ (*Against the Professors* 1.303 cf. *Against the Logicians* 1.121). In his *Against the Logicians* 1.92-93, Sextus repeats the quotation without attributing it to Empedocles. Instead he refers to Philolaus, who said that things are understood when a certain συγγένεια is possessed, since things are comprehended by their like (ὑπὸ τοῦ ὁμοίου τὸ ὅμοιον καταλαμβάνεσθαι πέφυκεν). Sextus cites Poseidonius as saying very much the same thing in his interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*: light is known by light, and sound by hearing since "The nature of all things ought to be apprehended by its kindred reason" (...ὑπὸ συγγενεοῦς ... καταλαμβάνεσθαι τοῦ λόγου). In these texts Sextus gives a "map" of the principle "like is known by like". He mentions some important sources, he states both the antiquity and the importance of this epistemological principle. The principle of likeness forms a substratum to Plotinus's logic in his *Enneads*:

To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it (τὸ γὰρ ὁρῶν πρὸς τὸ ὁρώμενον συγγενὲς καὶ ὅμοιον ποιησάμενον δεῖ ἐπιβάλλειν)⁽¹⁸⁾. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful. Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty (*Enneads* I.6.9)

Antiquity shared a theory that human beings had a light within, streaming forth through the eyes and meeting the light of day. The eye was likened to a light within or a lamp that made perception possible⁽¹⁹⁾. This theory of vision developed a principle of perception, an epistemological conviction that like is known by like.

Empedocles said, "that is because he who looks for a wise man must first be wise himself" (159)". Diogenes Laertius 9.20 attributes this saying to Xenophanes.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Greek philosophy shared the thought of the intellect as divine; gods and humans share a rational nature; see JARVIS, "Becoming like God through Christ: Discipleship in Romans", 145-147.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The translation is taken from S. MACKENNA, *Plotinus. The Ethical Treatises* (The Library of Philosophical Translations 1; London 1917). Greek text, see P. HENRY – H.-R. SCHWYZER, *Plotini Opera*, Tomus I, *Enneades I-III* (Oxford 1964).

⁽¹⁹⁾ H.D. BETZ, "Matthew VI.22f and ancient Greek theories of vision", *Text and Interpretation. Studies in the New Testament presented to Matthew Black* (eds. E. BEST – R.McL. WILSON) (Cambridge 1979) 43-56; D.C. ALLISON, Jr., "The Eye is the Lamp of the Body (Matthew 6.22-23=Luke 11.34-36)", *NTS* 33 (1987) 61-83.

Philo picks up this theory as well as the Greek notion of the human mind or soul as sharing in a portion of the Divine. With these convictions in mind, he addresses biblical theology. Men alone have knowledge of the invisible God because God breathed into them from above (ἄνωθεν) His own Deity (*Det.* 84-90). In *Spec.Leg.* 4.14 this idea is expressed in terms of men's συγγένεια to God. In *Praem.* 40-46, Philo speaks of those who can apprehend⁽²⁰⁾ that God is. Philo consciously draws a distinction between God's real nature and the knowledge of His existence. The univocal Biblical testimony on the impossibility of human beings seeing God paves the way for this important distinction. Philo's emphasis that God's existence cannot be apprehended by any human co-operation is probably due to his resistance to the notion of having "god inside", as Empedocles puts it. Those who apprehend God's existence have, according to Philo, advanced from down to up (κάτωθεν ἄνω) on a sort of heavenly ladder. The analogy with Jacob becomes obvious when Philo says that such a man is Israel, a person who sees God (ὁρῶν θεόν), or more precisely, that He is. By an illustration Philo explains why this is possible:

Do we behold the sun which sense perceives by any other thing than the sun, or the stars by any others than the stars, and in general is not light seen by light? In the same way God too is His own brightness and is discerned through Himself alone, without any co-operating or being able to co-operate in giving a perfect apprehension of His existence (§ 45).

This brings to mind the well-known quotation from Empedocles, see above. Philo abbreviates this insight in § 46, saying that God is known through God (ὁ θεὸς θεῷ) and light by light (φωτὶ φῶς).

In *Spec.Leg.* 1.41-50 these thoughts on apprehending God are repeated in a meditation on Exod 33,13-23. Philo starts from Moses' request that God will reveal Himself to him. According to Philo, Moses asked to understand God's οὐσία. Moses motivated his request by referring to the principle of likeness: "for as knowledge of the light does not come by any other source but what itself supplies, so too Thou alone canst tell me of Thyself" (§ 42). God did not accept Moses' request since this knowledge is not for those who are brought into being by creation. Moses rephrased his request then, and asked to see

⁽²⁰⁾ Twice in this text Philo has καταλαμβάνειν and its cognate noun.

God's glory, surrounding Him⁽²¹⁾. This is possible, but reserved not for the eye of the body, but for "the eye of the mind". Throughout this text, Philo speaks of apprehension in terms of λαμβάνω, καταλαμβάνω, and κατάληψις. In this text it becomes apparent that Exod 33 led Philo to adapt the notion of likeness with reservations. In *Mut.* 3-4, Philo says that a vision of the Divine is only attainable to "the eye of the soul". The eyes of the body perceive according to the principle of likeness. When it comes to the eyes of the soul, however, this principle is explained in terms of beholding without any assistance or agency, in other words knowledge of a revelatory nature.

Thus the principle of likeness had a wide currency in Antiquity. It was considered ancient and basic, and it was frequently stated. "Like is known by like" was often connected to light being known by light. Apprehension was described by means of cognitive verbs, of which "seeing" played an important role. The term καταλαμβάνω and cognates occurred often enough to be worth noting. Philo adopted this principle and confirmed all the characteristics of the principle. Of special interest is that to Philo, Exod 33 provided both a bridge and a means of clarifying how to apply this principle in a Biblical context. Furthermore, he drew on Jacob's vision of the heavenly ladder to describe this principle. This applies very well to John's Gospel.

The question of knowing or seeing God (Exod 33–34) is at the centre of the Prologue. Apprehending God is not within reach for human beings, but Christ's role can be compared to Philo's ὅσα μετὰ τὸν θεόν which is attainable (John 1,18). "Seeing God" is in John 1,47-51 presented with Jacob's ladder as subtext. Light in opposition to darkness is among the favourite symbols of this Gospel⁽²²⁾. Cognitive terms abound, and John uses καταλαμβάνω twice in a way that is worth noting. In John 1,5 he says "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (κατέλαβεν)". When this term is used within a context speaking of light in opposition to darkness, we are indeed very close to the ancient material on "like is known by like"⁽²³⁾.

(21) According to *Post.* 129, Exod 33 implies that God Himself is beyond apprehension (αὐτὸς μόνος ἀκατάληπτος); what is attainable is, however, ὅσα μετὰ τὸν θεόν cf. *Fug.* 164-165 and *Mut.* 9.

(22) KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 141-173.

(23) For καταλαμβάνω in the sense of comprehending, see *BAGD* s.v. and *LSJ* s.v. and KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 143-144. The theme in John 1,5 is continued in vv. 9-10 where the cognitive aspect is clearly voiced; rather than being known, the light was rejected.

Since the prologue prefigures the story to be told in the Gospel, this text should be seen as providing an epistemological perspective on the entire story, and echoing that like is known by like as well. The verb καταλαμβάνω also occurs in John 12,35⁽²⁴⁾. Once again this verb appears in a text where light and darkness are contrasted (cf. v. 46). The immediate implication is here the struggle between darkness and light that forms an ideological framework for Jesus' ministry. Nonetheless, a cognitive aspect is involved. When darkness seizes power, there is no comprehension, neither of whither Jesus departs nor of the nature of his ministry. The cognitive aspect is emphasized by the citation of Isa 6,10 in the immediate context (12,40). Furthermore, John 12,35 echoes the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3. It is embedded in a context where Jesus' claim from 3,14 to be lifted up, is debated (12,34-36)⁽²⁵⁾. The second part of 12,35 also recalls the dialogue in chap. 3; walking in darkness implies inability to know Jesus' whither: οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει. This is almost a verbatim rendering of Jesus' words about the wind or Spirit in 3,8b. Thus, epistemology and Christology are here combined in a way which brings to mind how Jesus addressed the necessity of being born ἄνωθεν.

3. *The Whence and Whither of Jesus*

The introduction suggested that the whence and whither of the Spirit were progressively elucidated in the story until they became a cipher for the identity of Jesus⁽²⁶⁾. It is now time to demonstrate this. The meaning of John 3,8b is based on three constitutive elements:

οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει

We will now trace how these three elements are elucidated in John's story. Failure to know or understand "whence and whither" does not consistently carry theological implications. There are certainly instances where they appear without any claim of conveying anything beyond the simple story-line⁽²⁷⁾. But very often these three

⁽²⁴⁾ In John's Gospel λαμβάνω also sometimes takes on a cognitive meaning; see e.g. 3,11.27.32; 14,17.

⁽²⁵⁾ The lifting up of the Son of Man occurs also in 8,28, but the statement in 3,14 is the first appearance of this in the Gospel and is also verbally closer to 12,34.

⁽²⁶⁾ This is pointed out also by NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*, 53-55.

⁽²⁷⁾ E.g. John 1,48; 4,16; 6,27; 9,11; 11,31.44; 18,8; 21,3. It may be difficult to ascertain if a second level of meaning is at hand; e.g. John 11,8, cf. 7,3. The

elements, and consistently so when they appear together, signal a second level of meaning. They become a means of expressing the mysterious and enigmatic nature of Jesus' ministry and his identity, like in John 2,9: "When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν", and in John 4,10-11 where Jesus addresses the Samaritan woman by saying εἰ ᾔδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ and the woman asks him πόθεν οὖν ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν⁽²⁸⁾. The three elements occur most frequently in disputes with the Jews over the identity of Jesus, the so-called *christologische Streitgespräche* (chaps. 7–9), in the introduction of the "hour" in chap. 13, and in Jesus' farewell to his disciples in chaps. 14 and 16.

a) John 7

The celebration of the Festival of Booths forms the framework of the controversy in this chapter, possibly also in the two following chapters. The narrative is introduced by the question of "going up" (ὑπάγω) to Jerusalem (7,3), which 7,8 and 10 repeat in terms of ἀναβαίνω, a traditional term for going up to Jerusalem to worship. A reader acquainted with the entire story will here see a reference to Jesus' going up to Jerusalem as initiating his departure to his heavenly Father (e.g. 20,17). This interpretation is also favoured by ὑπάγε εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν (v. 3) being replaced by ὑπάγω πρὸς τὸν πέμψαντά με (v. 33), which becomes the crucial point in the controversy. In the light of the role of the "hour" in the story, this double meaning of "going up to Jerusalem" comes as no surprise (see esp. 13,1-3). John 7,30b is a reminder of the "hour", and thus prefigures the Passion and Resurrection. In this context a Christological dispute with the Jews occurs. The controversy is introduced in 7,11 and is carried throughout the entire chapter. From these observations we can tell that the language of whence and whither in vv. 27-29 is associated with Jesus' departure to his Father and is a cipher for true knowledge about Jesus' identity.

Knowing/not knowing the whence and whither of Jesus is essential for understanding who he is. The controversy becomes a question of how this knowledge can be acquired, most expressly stated in the claims in 7,27-29: knowing his identity is to know his whence and

disciples ask Jesus if he will again go to (ὑπάγω) Jerusalem, since they have already attempted to kill him there. Jerusalem and the death of Jesus are crucial for understanding the whither of Jesus in John's story. A narrative reading, therefore, throws some doubt on an immediate reading of 11,8.

⁽²⁸⁾ See also John 4,22.32; 5,3; 15,1.

whither. The claim of the Jews is: οἶδαμεν πόθεν ἐστὶν (v. 27). When the Messiah comes, however, no one will have proper knowledge of his identity⁽²⁹⁾. This claim to know from where Jesus comes, is, however, an irony⁽³⁰⁾. The controversy reveals their failure to understand who Jesus is, which will also become increasingly clear throughout the Gospel⁽³¹⁾. The Jews judge according to appearance (κατ' ὄψιν), an outward judgement according to the flesh (cf. 8,15).

To understand the whence and whither of Jesus, some likeness to him is required. This is pointed out in various ways in the controversy. In v. 29 this claim becomes an epistemological notion in terms of likeness: Jesus knows God because he has been with Him (cf. 1,18). The Jews claim to know the whence of Jesus, but they are wrong because they fail to understand this in the light of the “above – below” pattern of the Christology in John’s Gospel. In this way they resemble Nicodemus, who also missed this basic pattern; they both falsely claimed to know the identity of Jesus.

The epistemological perspective on the controversy in chap. 7 sheds light on the role of vv. 37-39. These verses are in many ways enigmatic, particularly since the passage seems detached from the Christological controversy that frames it. Following the punctuation of Nestle-Aland 27th ed., we take ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ to refer to believers. It is objected that Christ as the source of living water is more dominant in the Gospel⁽³²⁾. Christ is indeed the giver of the Spirit according to John, but this particular text is not simply reiterating this. Christ’s role as the giver of the Spirit is implicit in v. 37: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me”. V. 39 shifts the emphasis to the believers’ reception of the Spirit and is a comment on v. 38 by the narrator. Furthermore, the 3rd person singular (αὐτοῦ) is indicative of this. If it was a comment about Jesus himself, we should expect (ἐ)μοῦ. This can hardly be explained as a supposed quotation⁽³³⁾, since v. 38 is a

⁽²⁹⁾ A reference to the hidden Messiah; see R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel according to John I-XII* (AncB; London etc., 1971) 53. John has adapted this to his own thought on the mysterious Christ.

⁽³⁰⁾ JULIAN, *Jesus and Nicodemus*, 90 says that “...on the lips of the Jews, the verb οἶδαμεν is, almost always used ironically” with reference to John 3,2; 6,42; 7,27; 9,24. 29.

⁽³¹⁾ So also MEEKS, “The Man from Heaven”, 60.

⁽³²⁾ Thus e.g. WAI-YEE NG, *Water Symbolism in John*. An Eschatological Interpretation (Studies in Biblical Literature 15; New York etc. 2001) 78-81.

⁽³³⁾ Pace BROWN, *Spirit*, 156.

combination of several scriptural passages⁽³⁴⁾. Since it is a paraphrase or a reworking of many OT texts, it is unlikely that v. 38 has preserved the 3rd person singular due to an original setting. There is simply too much “editing” in v. 38 to imply that the 3rd person singular represents a quote.

Vv. 38-39 fits nicely into the controversy on who Jesus is and how it is possible to know his identity. The Spirit, which in 3,3-8 represented the transforming power from above, is now within the believers. Jesus, who is himself the well of living water, makes the disciples become a spring of water as well (cf. 4,11). Similarly, the life that Jesus has in himself (1,4) in 3,15 becomes the life of the believers. Jesus is light, and he also enlightens (1,9). The same movement appears in John 7,38-39: The Spirit is now within the believers. Hence they can also know that the true identity of Jesus is from above.

The explicit references in 7,37-39 are to “coming” to Jesus and “believing” in him. This is not epistemological language, but as noted above, epistemology is integrated into this language in John’s Gospel. The believers become a source of spiritual knowledge only after having come to Jesus. Spirit is the prerequisite for understanding the dispute about Jesus’ identity in chap. 7. Towards the end of this controversy the knowledge of Scripture becomes the issue. It is in accordance with John’s Gospel that only by the Spirit can the Christological implications of the OT be rightly understood⁽³⁵⁾. This conforms to the epistemological aspect of the dialogue with Nicodemus: the Spirit transforms and thus gives new insight.

The principle “like is known by like” is implicit in this Christological controversy. Knowing the whence and whither of Jesus demands having the Spirit associated with Jesus’ glorification in John. Vv. 37-39 thus forms the opposite of judging κατ’ ὄψιν and is a parallel to 3,6b as well: “What is born of Spirit is Spirit”, and therefore also able to understand. The relevance of referring to the dialogue with Nicodemus is justified in the light of 7,50 where he is brought into the

⁽³⁴⁾ This is admitted also by BROWN, *Spirit*, 156.

⁽³⁵⁾ See John 2,22; 5,46-47; 12,16; 14,17.26; 15,26; 16,7.13-55; 19,28; 20,9. This is emphasized by C. HOEGEN-ROHLS, *Der nachösterliche Johannes*. Die Abschiedsreden als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zum vierten Evangelium (WUNT II/84; Tübingen 1996) 39, 68-69, 214. She demonstrates that 7,38 looks back to 1,50-51 and leads on to farewell speeches where Jesus speaks of “...der nachösterlichen Dimension des ‘Grösseren’”. There is no mention of the Spirit in the story between 7,39 and the farewell discourses.

controversy. The mention of him works as a flashback; we are reminded of Nicodemus' incipient faith, but also of his failure to comprehend. John 7,25-29 is thus a Christological controversy focusing on the whence and whither of Jesus. This is centred on Jesus' relationship with his heavenly Father, his coming from Him and returning to Him. This controversy has a structure which brings to mind the epistemological character of the dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3,5-8. Only the Spirit can know who Jesus is.

b) John 8

John 8 progressively repeats the argument of chap.7. Jesus claims to be "the light of the world" (v. 12). His followers do not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. "Walking" brings to mind ethics and lifestyle, but the controversy gives emphasis to knowing Jesus. This epistemological aspect is implicit in v. 12b about "having the light of life", which describes the result of the illumination mentioned in 1,9. The believers have faith as a source of light in themselves; i.e. the movement from christology to anthropological implications noted above in 7,37-39.

Once again, understanding Jesus is a question of knowing whence he comes and whither he goes. Jesus' confidence in being sent by his Father is expressed in this terminology: οἶδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω (v. 14). The whence and whither strongly emphasize his dependence on the Father. Jesus has not taken this ministry upon himself, it has been given him from above (cf. v. 28). The unbelief of the Pharisees is presented as a marked contrast: ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω. They are unable to know Jesus or to follow him whither he departs (vv. 21-23). This is due to their judging by human standards (v. 15). Their failure to know whence and whither, due to σὰρξ, brings to mind the Nicodemus dialogue. So too does Jesus' pointed remark in v. 23 about human inability to gain access to the place of his origin and destination: "You are from below (ἐκ τῶν κάτω I am from,) above (ἐκ τῶν ἄνω)" (cf. v. 44). Knowledge depends on being from below or from above (cf. 3,31). This is an implicit claim to the principle of likeness: "like is known by like".

An epistemological contrast marks the whole controversy. The "seeing" and "speaking" of Jesus is contrasted with that of the Jews (v. 38), while He is from above and they from below. This is exactly the contrast made in the dialogue with Nicodemus⁽³⁶⁾. The principle of

⁽³⁶⁾ Thus also NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*, 81.

likeness is voiced: “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (v. 19). The question of “knowing the truth” (v. 32) echoes 18,37, witnessing to the principle which according to 8,47 is foundational: ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀκούει· διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ. The following contrasts appear:

A. Pharisees/the Jews	B. Jesus
Walk in darkness	He is the light
Judge according to flesh	Judges no one or makes true judgment
They are from below	He is from above
They are earthbound/from this world	He is not earthbound/not from this world
The Devil is their Father	He is from God

A less visible, but still present contrast is also at work. Believers are contrasted with the Pharisees and likened to Jesus. We have seen that John 8,12 speaks of the follower of Jesus who has the light, thus paving the way for applying the Christological pattern to believers generally (24, 30-31 cf. v. 46)⁽³⁷⁾. According to 8,44, the Jews were children of the Devil since they did not have truth in them; the believers, however, will know the truth (28,32). Since what one understands is solely dependent upon what is within — so runs the theory of vision — this contrast to the Pharisees and likeness with Jesus follows naturally. It can easily be inferred that the believers have God as their Father, and this is actually spelled out in v. 47. The immediate context indicates that “hearing God’s word” here applies to the believers. The Christological pattern is made relevant to the believers. The pattern is not worked out fully, but the contrasts to A and the similarities with B⁽³⁸⁾ are sufficient to be worth noting; particularly so since the points of convergence are identical with the fundamental points in the logic of chap. 8: followers/believers both (1) have the light and (2) are from God.

Jesus is the one person who is from above, but the believers participate in his identity ἄνω while still being κάτω. This paradoxical truth is crucial in chap. 17 where a distinction is made between being in the world and belonging to the world (17,13-14.16), also voiced in 8,23. Like Jesus, the believers do not belong to the world, but unlike

⁽³⁷⁾ According to John 8,28 knowledge of Jesus’ identity will come when the Son of Man is lifted up (cf. 3,14). This corresponds to the narrative aside in 7,39.

⁽³⁸⁾ V. 52 and v. 55 also juxtapose Jesus and the believers in a way worth noticing.

Him, they are in the world: “The perception of who Jesus is, brought about by the mysterious work of the Spirit (3,7-8), entails being ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ but not ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου”⁽³⁹⁾. Thus chap. 8 brings out the likeness of the believers with Jesus, but also the distinction between them and Him.

Is there a flashback to the Nicodemus dialogue in this dispute? As noted above, there are significant points of convergence bridging the distance between the two episodes. Both instances are about teachers of Israel, both of whom are unable to comprehend. The Pharisees walk in darkness; Nicodemus came at night (cf. 3,19-21). The Pharisees judge according to human standards, while Nicodemus is implicitly said to be born of flesh. At the centre of both texts is the vertical axis (earth – heaven), explicitly voiced in 8,33 and more implicitly in chap. 3 but nevertheless not to be overlooked (cf. 3,13-14.31). The Pharisees and Nicodemus are presented within the same epistemological pattern, which implies the principle of likeness. What they fail to know is described in similar terms, the whence and whither of the mystery of faith and the whence and whither of Jesus himself. Finally, in both chapters “birth” sums up what is at stake. In 3,3-8 this is obvious, but the response of the Pharisees implies that the question of birth is involved: “We are not illegitimate children (γεγεννήμεθα)” (8,41)⁽⁴⁰⁾.

c) John 9

The narrative starts out as a miracle story. Jesus makes the man born blind see (9,1-7). Throughout the text ἀναβλέπω, βλέπω, ἀνοίγω τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς are repeated. The incident takes place on a Sabbath and hence the narrative becomes a dispute on the identity of Jesus and his authority to perform the healing. It becomes a controversy with the Pharisees and Jews on who Jesus is (vv. 16.22.24.35-36), very much in line with the preceding chapters, but with increasing hostility. The miracle is called a sign (v. 16), thus indicating a second level of meaning. The reader is guided to this level in two ways. In the first place, vv. 4-5 presents Jesus as the “light of the world” as opposed to darkness. Since Jesus is himself the light, he can make the blind man see⁽⁴¹⁾. Vv. 4-5 echoes John 11,9-10 where “having the light within

⁽³⁹⁾ NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*, 111.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ The textual criticism question involved here does not affect this fact.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Since readers know from several passages (e.g. 1,9; 8,12) that Jesus is the light of the world, the miracle signals a new level of meaning; KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 163.

oneself” is a reference to the disciples’ understanding the implications of his departure (ὑπάγω) for Jerusalem.

Furthermore, John 9,39-40 appears as Jesus’ final comment on the whole incident. He alludes to Isa 6,10, cited also in John 12,40, where “seeing” has an obvious spiritual reference. Jesus also blames the Pharisees for their blindness, a clear circumlocution for their lack of understanding (9,40-41). Thus “v. 39...reflects the transformation that occurs within the narrative; ‘sight’ has now taken on a symbolic value rather than the literal sense of the opening scene”⁽⁴²⁾.

At the centre of the dispute is the understanding of who Jesus is. Within the narrative two opposite movements with regard to knowledge are discernable. The rejection on the part of the Pharisees hardens; they prefer “sinner” (v. 24) for “this man is not from God” (v. 16) as a proper description of who Jesus is⁽⁴³⁾. They claim to know (ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν) (vv. 24,29), which in John’s language is, as we have seen, a recurrent sign of irony. This becomes apparent within the story itself. They claim the support of Moses, a view that is rejected elsewhere in the Gospel (John 5,45-46). When it comes to the crucial question, the whence of Jesus, they say: οὐκ οἶδαμεν (vv. 29-30). The man born blind, however, moves from οὐκ οἶδα (vv. 11, 25) to believe in Jesus (vv. 36-38). At the end of the narrative he has gained sight, both in a physical and spiritual sense. He declares his faith and has gained sight fully.

Does this incident in any way shed some light on the dialogue with Nicodemus and birth from above in particular? Generally, both texts deal with Jewish teachers who fail to understand Jesus and his ministry. Both texts centre on the theme of light or seeing vs. darkness and blindness. Within this pattern some special features worth noting appear. Nicodemus’ comment in 3,2 is echoed in the question of the man born blind: “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” (9,16b cf. 9,31,33). The blind expresses his surprise in a way (ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε πόθεν ἐστίν, καὶ ἡνοιξέν μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς) (9,30) which brings to mind Jesus’ ironic statement to Nicodemus: “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?” (3,10)⁽⁴⁴⁾.

⁽⁴²⁾ D.A. LEE, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*. The Interplay of Form and Meaning (JSNTSS 95; Sheffield 1994) 170, 179.

⁽⁴³⁾ Similarly KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 161.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See the margin of NESTLE-ALAND’S 27th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

Birth plays a key role in both passages. The occurrence of γεννᾶω in John's Gospel is concentrated in chaps. 3 and 9. Some exceptions affirm this impression (1,13; 8,41), and the other three instances are not relevant here⁽⁴⁵⁾. Within John 3,3-8 γεννᾶω appears 8 times and in chap. 9 five times. This invites some comments. According to chap. 3 Nicodemus was unable to understand that Jesus spoke not of physical birth but birth from above. A similar movement is assumed in chap. 9 as well. In all occurrences of γεννᾶω in this chapter the reference is to physical birth, but 9,34 is different. The Pharisees say to the man born blind: "You were born entirely in sins, and you are trying to teach us". This refers to his refusal to accept their judgement on Jesus⁽⁴⁶⁾. They saw nothing but σάρξ in him. Of course, the irony here is blatant. The accusation implies that more than a physical birth is at stake in this controversy. The contrasting of fleshly and spiritual birth seems to lie behind John 9⁽⁴⁷⁾.

From a narrative perspective it can easily be inferred not only that the man born blind gained spiritual sight, but also that he was born ἄνωθεν, since the story is designed to convince the reader that the judgement uttered by the Pharisees in v. 34 is an absolute misunderstanding. Actually, things look exactly the opposite from the perspective of the narrator. This depends, of course, on the reader's ability to combine chap. 3 and 9; but the narrative in chap. 9 is certainly paving the way for this to happen.

4. Bringing the findings together

The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus is not an isolated incident in John's story. This narrative, and 3,3-8 in particular defines what is necessary to understand Jesus, his ministry and faith in him adequately. The dialogue is fundamental to the question of "knowing", a concern permeating the entire Gospel. Since men have no capacity to know heavenly things, a transformation is required. This transformation is understood in terms of the contrast between flesh and Spirit, earthly and heavenly, and is, therefore, expressed in the principle that "like can only be known by like". The required transformation is

⁽⁴⁵⁾ This verb occurs twice in John 16,2, a proverbial analogy where emphasis is on joy not birth, while 18,37 speaks of Jesus himself.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ The accusation is polemically formed, while Jesus in chap. 3 simply speaks of the inability of men to comprehend what is from above.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Suggested also by BROWN, *Spirit*, 121.

abbreviated in the notion of birth ἄνωθεν. The fact that knowledge is due to this required transformation forms a point of departure for comprehending both misunderstandings and irony in the Gospel. Readers without this transformation will fail to understand. This demonstrates the importance of this dialogue for the entire story.

The scholarly debate on birth ἄνωθεν has been too limited to the lexical alternatives (anew/again or from above). Arguments for both alternatives can be gleaned from John's Gospel⁽⁴⁸⁾. John explores here the ambiguity of the Greek term, and this article suggests that the implications of birth ἄνωθεν must be drawn from the entire story, and in particular the Christological cipher of the whence and whither of Jesus. This language, which abbreviates or codifies the kernel of John's Christology, hardly appears by accident in 3,8. Accordingly, the precise meaning of ἄνωθεν should take into consideration the Johannine style of progressive unfolding of topics. A lexical approach hardly accounts for this. οὕτως ἐστὶν in 3,8 involves a comparison which looks beyond the analogy of the wind.

In commenting on birth ἄνωθεν in John 3, Udo Schnelle says that: "...Christus und die Seinen sind ihrem Ursprungsort nach wesensverwandt"⁽⁴⁹⁾. Otfried Hofius protests vehemently: "Der Vierte Evangelist ist kein Gnostiker!"⁽⁵⁰⁾. The German "wesensverwandt" is misleading here, but some συγγένεια between Jesus and the believers is suggested. This is implicit in the required transformation and the principle of likeness. It is certainly a question how far one can take this "likeness". To be "born from above" establishes a new connection with the Son of God, who is from above, but it by no means eliminates all distinctions between people and Christ. People see the light, but they themselves do not become the light in the same way as Christ is. The believers are ascribed an identity from above, but this does not mean that they have descended from above; that is reserved exclusively for the Son of Man. They participate in the sphere above while still being in the world. Although their identity is heavenly, it is only Christ who

⁽⁴⁸⁾ For an overview of opinions held, see e.g. JULIAN, *Jesus and Nicodemus*, 82-84.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ U. SCHNELLE, *Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium*. Eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des vierten Evangeliums in der johanneischen Schule (FRLANT 144; Göttingen 1987) 201; see also his *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THNT 4; Leipzig 2000) 69. GREESE, "Unless One is Born Again", 689 similarly speaks of "becoming like Christ".

⁽⁵⁰⁾ HOFIUS, "Das Wunder der Wiedergeburt", 43, n. 50.

has heaven as his place of origin. But Christ “holds out the possibility of birth ἄνωθεν in a derivative sense to humankind”⁽⁵¹⁾. Although Gnosticism is slippery to define, I take these reservations to imply that the likeness addressed in this article does not in any way justify labelling Johannine thinking as “Gnosticism”.

John explores the nature of faith or birth ἄνωθεν with the help of the disputes about Jesus’ identity, and thus brings out some anthropological implications of his christology. With the Nicodemus dialogue as the point of departure, the following observations hold true both for Jesus’ identity and the believer’s faith:

Both are mysterious and enigmatic. There is something elusive⁽⁵²⁾ about Christ in John’s Gospel, and this is connected to his whence and whither. The nature of faith is similarly mysterious; it is beyond human capacity to comprehend it. The whence of faith is explained by help of the equally mysterious whence and whither of Jesus.

The mysterious whence and whither both of Jesus and faith implies a given. The identity of Jesus is explained in terms of given, not taken. This is implied when faith in chap. 3 is compared with the whence and whither of the wind as well as of Christ.

From this follows that both Jesus and faith are dependent solely on God or the Father.

The whence and whither of both Jesus and faith are, finally, a reference to God in Heaven. That is where the origin, with the mentioned reservations in mind, of both is to be found. This corresponds very much with birth ἄνωθεν as being born from above.

As the story progresses, the parabolic saying about the wind (3,8), which pointed out both its reality and the mysterious nature, takes on a new level of meaning. The story led us to the Christological disputes in chaps. 7–9 with emphasis on the divine origin of both Jesus and faith. Finally, this is confirmed in chap. 13 and the following chapters where the “hour” of departure has arrived. Hence ὑπάγω is now in focus. This verb now refers to Jesus’ return to his Heavenly Father (13,3.33.36; 14,4.5.28; 16,5.19). The verb is combined with prepositional phrases like πρὸς τὸν πατέρα/πρὸς τὸν θεόν/πρὸς τὸν πέμψαντά με. This final phrase includes the whence of Jesus, which is also the case in 13,3 where πόθεν is replaced by ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν. Jesus’

⁽⁵¹⁾ NICHOLSON, *Death as Departure*, 111.

⁽⁵²⁾ This term has been coined by M.W.G. STIBBE, *John’s Gospel* (New Testament Readings; London – New York 1994) 6, 15, 21, 23, 24, 29.

identity and ministry is a divine affair from beginning to end. Such is also the mysterious nature of faith.

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SUMMARY

In John 3 birth ἀνωθεν is illustrated by the wind. Its effect can be experienced without knowledge of from whence it comes and whither it goes. This analogy asserts both the reality and the mysterious nature of the wind. John 3,8 is, however, not exhausted by this analogy. John 3,3-8 belongs within an epistemological pattern found throughout this Gospel: like is known by like. The mysterious and enigmatic nature of Jesus' identity sheds light on the "whence and whither" of John 3,8. Christology thus becomes a key to understand the mysterious nature of faith.

Évangile et prophétie
Un texte original (1 P 1,10-12) peut-il éclairer
un texte difficile (2 P 1,16-21)?

Posons clairement le but et les limites de notre enquête. Il ne s'agit pas de se prononcer sur l'ensemble des rapports entre la deuxième et la première de Pierre, sujet largement débattu, ou d'aborder la question des auteurs des épîtres. Le seul présupposé que nous adoptons — il correspond à un avis très majoritaire — est une connaissance de la première de Pierre par la deuxième (cf. 2 P 3,1) et donc la pertinence de l'examen d'une éventuelle parenté entre des passages appartenant à l'une et à l'autre. Nous tentons de montrer que le texte particulièrement difficile de 2 P 1,16-21 s'éclaire si l'on prend en compte la lumière que vient projeter l'étude de 1 P 1,10-12.

Examiner l'éventualité de rapports ponctuels entre les deux œuvres n'est pas une entreprise neuve. Divers auteurs, dans des intentions variées, n'ont pas manqué de repérer des points de contact. L'effort le plus caractérisé et déjà ancien est celui de G.H. Boobyer «The Indebtedness of 2 Peter to 1 Peter», mais, pour les passages qui nous intéressent, sa contribution est limitée; il s'attache surtout au motif de la transfiguration⁽¹⁾. Reconnaissons-le dès maintenant, la solution que nous privilégions suppose, pour 2 Pierre, des choix exégétiques qui, sans être inédits, n'obtiennent pas l'adhésion du plus grand nombre.

Nous exposons successivement les deux textes en dégagant leurs éléments constitutifs et, essentiellement pour 2 Pierre, les choix exégétiques qui s'imposent; nous abordons ensuite la question des correspondances.

1. La prophétie au service de l'Évangile: 1 P 1,10-12

1 P 1,10-12 n'est pas un texte spécialement difficile. Son axe principal représente une conviction bien établie dans le christianisme primitif: les anciens prophètes ont préparé la proclamation de

⁽¹⁾ G.H. BOOBYER, «The Indebtedness of 2 Peter to 1 Peter», *New Testament Essays. Studies in Memory of T.W. MANSON* (éd. A.J.B. HIGGINS) (London 1959) 34-43.

l'Évangile en attestant à l'avance l'œuvre du Christ. Désormais, les prédicateurs de cet Évangile, grâce à la réalisation des prophéties et sous l'action de l'Esprit, peuvent proclamer au monde, avec assurance, la grandeur d'un salut qui suscite émerveillement et reconnaissance. L'originalité du passage a trait à la description de l'attitude des prophètes et à celle des anges. On relève les motifs suivants:

Le salut. Décrit dans les versets précédents (1,3-9) comme réalité précieuse mais encore ambiguë (épreuves; non-visibilité) *ce* salut est situé par quelques expressions: c'est «la grâce qui vous était destinée» (10b)⁽²⁾; il s'agit «des souffrances destinées au Christ et des gloires qui les suivraient» (v. 11); ce sont maintenant «ces choses qui vous ont été annoncées par les porteurs de la Bonne Nouvelle» (v. 12a), si belles «que les anges désirent y plonger leurs regards» (12,b). Les aspects de ce salut qui ressortent sont la générosité divine (χάρις, «une grâce»), la centralité de la Personne et de l'œuvre du Christ («les souffrances et les gloires»), avec un accent sur la dimension de gloire (le pluriel «les gloires» et l'émerveillement des anges).

La parole des prophètes. Le rôle et la condition des prophètes occupent la majeure partie de ces trois versets (une place plus large que celle relative aux porteurs de l'Évangile). La nouveauté dans la présentation de leur activité réside en ceci: ils attestent une grâce qu'ils ne peuvent pas vraiment comprendre. Ce n'est certainement pas une façon de refuser toute utilité immédiate à la prophétie d'Israël (désignation globale des Écrits sacrés), mais l'expression d'une certitude: le Christ est la clé qui en ouvre le sens (cf. Lc 24,35; Ac 3,18). Trois indications rares assurent l'originalité du passage: 1) les prophètes percevaient qu'ils annonçaient une réalisation messianique qui comporterait souffrance et gloire; 2) conscients d'une profondeur qui les dépassait, ils voulaient en savoir davantage et devenaient d'infatigables chercheurs, scrutant «le temps et les circonstances»; 3) comme une grâce et une limite infranchissable, il leur fut révélé que le message n'était pas pour eux-mêmes mais pour une génération à venir, en fait les bénéficiaires de l'Évangile⁽³⁾.

(2) Ce pluriel δόξας est exceptionnel. On le retrouve uniquement dans la Deuxième de Pierre, à propos des «gloires célestes», les êtres célestes, en 2,10, et en Jude 8. Il semble insuffisant de considérer que ce pluriel est amené par le pluriel παθήματα, qui est fréquent. Un pluriel peut viser soit plusieurs occurrences, soit la diversité des manifestations d'une réalité. S'il s'agit d'une pluralité, on pensera à la résurrection, à l'ascension (cf 3,18), à la parousie.

(3) Dans l'AT, la perplexité des prophètes devant les voies de Dieu et le message confié est parfois signalée (Ha 3,2; Dn 9,22.27; 12,6-13; cf. également 4

Le ministère de l'Esprit. Il œuvrait dans les prophètes en indiquant et en attestant à l'avance le destin du Messie, et il accompagne la prédication de l'Évangile ([έν] πνεύματι ὀγίω).

Les prédicateurs de l'Évangile. Il leur revient de servir (διηκόνου) ce message de salut que les prophètes ont communiqué, désormais dans la clarté découlant de l'événement rédempteur et de l'intervention de l'Esprit «envoyé du ciel».

La disposition de ces éléments retient l'attention. Dans une sorte de chiasme assez lâche, la Personne du Christ Sauveur, souffrant et glorieux, se trouve placée au cœur de la Parole, à la fois l'ancienne et la nouvelle:

A *ce* (glorieux) salut

B la parole des prophètes-chercheurs témoignant à l'avance du Christ, par l'Esprit

C le Christ Sauveur, ses souffrances et ses gloires

B' la parole des porteurs de l'Évangile annonçant le Christ, par l'Esprit

A' le salut (*ces choses*) si glorieux qu'il attire le regard des anges

On distingue *des éléments de continuité*: un plan divin, un Dieu qui parle, un seul salut, un seul Esprit agissant, même si la désignation diffère [«l'Esprit du Christ», 11a⁽⁴⁾]; «l'Esprit Saint envoyé du ciel», 12b], une même Parole en ce qu'elle a en permanence un objet identique.

Les différences entre l' «autrefois» et le «maintenant» portent essentiellement sur les modalités: les prophètes énoncent une parole certaine, «authenticifiée» par l'Esprit⁽⁵⁾, mais qui les intrigue, et il leur est révélé qu'ils travaillent pour d'autres, alors que les apôtres et les témoins, après l'intervention du Christ et la Pentecôte, annoncent avec assurance un message clarifié. Pour ce qui concerne l'Esprit, les actions sont distinctes: d'un côté, une présence efficace («l'Esprit du

Esdras 4,33-34; 5,13), et les apocalypses juives expriment souvent le sentiment de parler pour une autre génération (*I Hénoc* 1,2). C'est à Qumrân que l'investigation de la prophétie devient un motif récurrent. L'ignorance des anciens prophètes est affirmée (*Pesher d'Habaquq* 7,1-14) et il revient au Maître de justice et à la communauté d'explicitier le sens des textes.

⁽⁴⁾ L'expression «Esprit du Christ» ou «de Jésus», ou «du Fils», n'est pas courante, ni dans l'épître ni dans les autres livres du NT (seulement Ac 16,7; Rm 8,9; Ga 4,6; Ph 1,19, jamais en rapport avec l'AT). Application à l'AT du vocabulaire chrétien? Allusion à la préexistence du Christ agissant par l'Esprit? Plus simplement la volonté de souligner que l'Esprit qui intervenait dans la prophétie est le même que celui qui a animé le Christ et qui accompagne son message.

⁽⁵⁾ L'adjectif προμαρτυρόμενον introduit cette nuance d'authentification.

Christ en eux) agissant sur la production de la parole relative au Christ, de l'autre côté, une intervention peu précisée en rapport avec la prédication de l'Évangile; le [έν] πνεύματι ἀγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ peut indiquer un accompagnement donnant efficacité à la Parole, motif bien connu, ou avoir une fonction d'illumination (cf. Jn 14,26; 15,13; 1 Co 2,13; 12,3), ce dernier aspect paraissant approprié à un contexte qui a développé l'idée d'une relative obscurité de la prophétie pour les anciens.

Reste la question des raisons qui ont poussé l'auteur à placer ici ce développement. C'est une section charnière, entre, d'une part, l'énoncé d'une bénédiction qui exalte les aspects glorieux du salut offert en Jésus Christ, énoncé à l'indicatif d'un «déjà» accordé et promis (v. 3-9) et, d'autre part, l'impératif d'une série d'exhortations visant l'existence chrétienne dans le monde (v. 13-21; «éveillez-vous...»; «soyez sobres...»; «ne vous conformez pas aux désirs que vous aviez autrefois...»; etc.). Il y a toute raison de penser que l'auteur veut rappeler le fondement sur lequel repose et la certitude du salut et l'opportunité de ses propres exhortations: le fondement de la Parole. L'élément mis spécialement en évidence est la parole des prophètes, parole bien orientée, quoique voilée, puisque dirigée vers le Christ, mais il s'agit aussi de la situer exactement par rapport à l'Évangile. La situer, c'est montrer qu'il y a, en fait, une seule parole: les prophètes «étaient au service de ces choses que vous annoncez maintenant les prédicateurs de la Bonne Nouvelle» (v. 12). L'unité du message assure sa solidité. Demeure, en arrière-plan, le problème de la juste compréhension de la prophétie. Si ces hommes de Dieu qu'étaient les prophètes ne pouvaient dominer leurs propres discours en dépit de leurs incessantes investigations, il est clair que la compréhension humaine est dépassée. Les anciens ne pouvaient décoder leur message, car le «moment», le καιρός, n'était pas venu et ses circonstances n'étaient pas précisées. Les chrétiens, eux, appartiennent au «maintenant». La fin du passage, sans être très explicite, fait état de deux facteurs qui doivent leur permettre une bonne saisie. En employant la tournure οἱ εὐαγγελιστάμενοι ὑμᾶς, «ceux qui vous ont apporté l'Évangile», il est suggéré que la parole peut désormais être annoncée clairement comme une Bonne Nouvelle, une Nouvelle de salut accompli et disponible. Le deuxième facteur est l'activité de l'Esprit, don du ciel, auquel on peut reconnaître ce double pouvoir, persuasion et dévoilement. Les croyants sont donc invités à se réjouir de la fermeté de la parole du salut, parole prêchée dans les Églises et parole lue dans les Écritures.

Une polémique est-elle sous-jacente? L'épître ne mène pas de combat contre des «hérésies». La remarque finale «je vous ai écrit ...pour vous exhorter et vous attester que c'est à la véritable grâce de Dieu que vous êtes attachés» (v. 5,12) a l'allure, non d'une attaque contre des opposants, mais d'une volonté d'encouragement et de réconfort. L'auteur prépare donc en 1,10-12 l'utilisation massive de l'Ancien Testament à laquelle il va s'adonner, mais sa lecture sera strictement christologique, dans l'indispensable soumission à l'Esprit (dès la salutation, v. 2, une des dimensions de la condition chrétienne est «la sanctification par l'Esprit», [ἐν] πνεύματι ἁγίῳ). On sait que la Première de Pierre est un des livres du Nouveau Testament qui comptent proportionnellement le plus de citations de l'Ancien Testament ou d'allusions⁽⁶⁾.

2. Solidité de l'Évangile et de la prophétie (2 P 1,16-21)

Ce passage de la Deuxième de Pierre peut être qualifié de difficile dans la mesure où il impose des décisions délicates, et l'intention même de l'auteur prête à discussion. On distingue deux parties, 16-18 et 19-21, reliées entre elles par «et», éventuellement par la comparaison βεβαιότερον («plus ferme» ou «très ferme»). L'unité de l'ensemble est assurée par un thème commun, la Parole, une parole transmise par les apôtres («nous vous avons fait connaître» (1,16) et la parole prophétique «à laquelle vous faites bien de vous attacher» (1,19). Les destinataires, le «nous» apostolique, commande à la fois le message relatif au Christ, 1,16-18, et l'affirmation relative à l'excellence de la prophétie, 1,19-21, avec, vraisemblablement, dans ce deuxième «nous», un élargissement qui permet d'associer la communauté chrétienne à la jouissance de ce trésor. Nous ne pouvons pas nous livrer ici à une étude détaillée d'un passage aussi riche. Nous retenons les éléments qui peuvent intervenir dans la comparaison entre 1 et 2 Pierre.

a) Le témoignage apostolique (1,16-18)

On ne peut négliger ce qui précède immédiatement cette section, les versets 12-15, d'autant que le lien est explicité par γάρ, «en effet», au début du verset 16. L'auteur y fait part de son souci que les fidèles gardent le souvenir des «ces choses» (ταῦτα, v. 12.15). Ce ταῦτα

⁽⁶⁾ Cf. S. BÉNÉTREAU, *La première épître de Pierre* (CEB; Vaux-sur-Seine 1984) 48-49.

renvoie lui-même au développement précédent (3-11), une sorte de résumé du message chrétien dans ses deux aspects conjoints: la munificence des grâces divines et la nécessité, à partir de ces grâces, d'une piété forte, résolue, seule apte à assurer un large accueil dans «le Royaume éternel de notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus Christ». «Ces choses» sont donc l'Évangile du Christ vu comme une globalité impliquant une grâce qui oblige. On note que dans les versets 12-15, au ton très personnel, la responsabilité apostolique s'exerce dans le présent (v. 13), mais concerne aussi l'avenir, la génération suivante, par la mise à disposition des enseignements indispensables (v. 15).

Au début du verset 16 le climat change: une négation vigoureuse annonce un propos polémique: «Ce n'est pas, en effet, en suivant des fables sophistiquées que nous vous avons fait connaître ...». On peut considérer cet accent polémique soit comme une défense de l'auteur devant des critiques portant sur l'annonce de l'Évangile, soit comme une attaque visant les discours d'adversaires. La décision importe peu pour notre étude, mais, avec un bon nombre de commentateurs, nous considérons comme vraisemblable une réaction au dénigrement de la prédication chrétienne, accusée de recourir à des «mythes» et à des «habiletés». L'intention est alors de revendiquer le sérieux du discours chrétien qui ne relève nullement d'une imagination débridée et de propos fallacieux. Un choix beaucoup plus lourd de conséquences s'impose dès ce verset 16 puisqu'il touche à la nature du message apostolique signalé par la formule «la puissance et l'avènement de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ». Deux interprétations s'affrontent. L'une, qui a les faveurs de nombreux modernes, repose sur une conviction très simple et très ferme: le mot *παρουσία*, «avènement», «venue», est une référence à la parousie glorieuse de Jésus à la fin des temps, le terme ayant acquis chez les chrétiens ce sens «technique». La présence de *δύναμις* comme premier terme du couple n'est pas gênante, dit-on, car on aurait un hendiadys, le sens global étant «l'avènement puissant», «l'avènement en puissance». Selon cette lecture «eschatologique», l'objet de 16-18 serait déjà la promotion de l'espérance chrétienne (elle sera développée au chapitre 3), une espérance dénigrée comme impliquant un mythe irrecevable. La place faite à l'épisode de la transfiguration (v. 17-18), dit-on, justifierait cette thèse car la glorification de Jésus y serait comme une annonce et un prototype de la parousie future. L'autre interprétation, plus sensible au lien avec ce qui précède immédiatement où il s'agit de l'Évangile du Christ en général, et surtout soucieuse de la rigueur du raisonne-

ment de l'auteur, laisse à παρουσία le sens «d'avènement», de «venue», mais sans référence à l'eschatologie. Dans ce cas, l'expression viserait le cœur de l'Évangile, la venue du Christ parmi les hommes pour leur salut, une venue marquée par des signes de puissance et de majesté, la transfiguration étant considérée comme le plus remarquable de ceux-ci.

Comme la décision sur ce point importe pour notre étude, il nous faut signaler brièvement les principaux arguments. L'atout majeur de l'interprétation «eschatologique» est linguistique: παρουσία possède, effectivement, dans le Nouveau Testament et dans les textes chrétiens du 1^{er} siècle, du moins en rapport avec le Christ, le sens spécifique de «parousie ultime et glorieuse». C'est aussi le sens en 2 P 3,4 et, dit-on, en 3,12, ce qui est discutable. C'est à partir du début du 2^e siècle (cf. Ignace d'Antioche, *Philadelphiens* 9.2) qu'il deviendra courant d'appeler parousie l'incarnation du Seigneur. Il faut noter, cependant, que le sens large de «présence» est bien connu dans le Nouveau Testament lorsqu'il s'agit d'hommes (1 Co 16,17; 2 Co 7,6 et 7; 2 Co 10,10; Ph 1,26; 2,12). Les autres arguments avancés ont moins de poids. On affirme que l'ensemble de l'épître est au service d'une apologie de l'espérance chrétienne primitive, donc de l'attente d'une parousie glorieuse. R.J. Bauckham note que δύναμις, comme δόξα ou κράτος, est souvent associé à la parousie ultime, et il envisage même la possibilité du souvenir de Mt 16,28 et Mc 9,1, où il est question de la venue du règne en puissance⁽⁷⁾. T. Fornberg établit une distinction entre «la majesté» dont les apôtres ont été témoins et la parousie en puissance située au cœur du message que l'auteur veut transmettre⁽⁸⁾. Pour J.N.D. Kelly, la mention de «l'entrée dans le Royaume éternel du Christ» en 1,11 préparait en quelque sorte la référence à la parousie future en 1,16⁽⁹⁾.

Les partisans d'une autre lecture ne manquent pas d'atouts. Le très savant exégète de Fribourg, C. Spicq, ne se laissait pas impressionner, dans son commentaire de 1966, par les considérations d'une majorité de commentateurs qui, déjà, «entendent la Parousie du second Avènement du Christ»⁽¹⁰⁾. À propos de la transfiguration, tout en

⁽⁷⁾ R.J. BAUCKHAM, *Jude – 2 Peter* (WBC; Waco, TX 1983) 215.

⁽⁸⁾ T. FORNBERG, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society. A Study of 2 Peter* (CB.NT 9; Lund 1977) 79.

⁽⁹⁾ J.N.D. KELLY, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (BNTC; London 1969) 318.

⁽¹⁰⁾ C. SPICQ, *Les épîtres de Pierre*, (SB; Paris 1966) 219-220.

reconnaissant que «la gloire du Seigneur transfiguré fut une préfiguration et un gage de sa parousie à la fin des temps», il est sensible au fait que les Synoptiques la considèrent comme anticipation de la résurrection (Mt 17,9; Mc 9,9-10; Lc 9,31) et non de la parousie. L'idée que la transfiguration puisse être perçue comme une sorte d'anticipation de la glorification future peut être retenue dans le cadre de l'interprétation «non eschatologique» du passage, mais alors comme une donnée secondaire, l'utilité première de la mention étant d'établir qu'une manifestation du Christ en gloire et approuvée du Dieu-Père a pu être enregistrée par des témoins qui non seulement «ont vu» (ἐπόπται), mais «ont entendu» la voix divine, et ont été «avec le Christ» sur la montagne⁽¹¹⁾. La solidité de la parole apostolique relève de ce statut privilégié des témoins. L'argument majeur de Spicq est que tout ramener à une apologie de la parousie future, y compris la transfiguration, serait saper la valeur de la démonstration de l'auteur: «Accentuer cette typologie serait détruire l'argument du verset, qui exclut les inférences plus ou moins imaginatives au profit des seuls faits constatables»⁽¹²⁾. Les adeptes de la thèse eschatologique n'offrent pas de réplique très consistante à cet argument logique. Kelly s'y essaye, mais son propos est une assertion et non une démonstration: «L'auteur affirme certainement que son message possède une base ferme dans l'expérience des apôtres, mais cela n'implique pas que cette expérience n'a pas pu être la révélation d'un événement surnaturel qui s'accomplira pleinement dans le futur»⁽¹³⁾. La thèse de la centralité dans l'épître du thème de l'attente de la parousie peut être considérée comme excessive: l'intérêt se fixe aussi sur une piété saine (1,3-11; l'essentiel du chapitre 2; 3,11-14) et sur la solidité de la parole qui fait autorité, celle des prophètes et des apôtres (1,16-21; 3,1-2; 3,15-16)⁽¹⁴⁾. Pour ce qui concerne l'eschatologie, c'est seulement en 3,3-15 que l'intention de défendre l'attente de la parousie est manifeste. Certes, l'idée d'un avenir que Dieu maîtrise est très

⁽¹¹⁾ C. BIGG, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, (ICC; Edinburgh 1961) 231: tout en adoptant l'interprétation eschatologique de παρουσία, il remarque: «On peut noter que St Pierre ne se réfère pas à la Transfiguration pour prouver la parousie, mais pour prouver la crédibilité des apôtres qui ont proclamé la parousie».

⁽¹²⁾ SPICQ, *Pierre*, 220. Il précise: «Ainsi donc, les Apôtres n'ont pas prêché le résultat de leurs spéculations, mais ce qu'ils ont vu de leurs propres yeux ...».

⁽¹³⁾ KELLY, *Peter and Jude*, 318.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Sur l'apport théologique de 2 P, S. BÉNÉTREAU, *La deuxième épître de Pierre, l'épître de Jude* (CEB; Vaux-sur-Seine 1994) 58-64.

présente, mais ce n'est pas tellement l'événement de la parousie du Christ qui retient l'attention, mais soit l'entrée du chrétien individuel dans le Royaume éternel (1,11), soit le «Jour», vu essentiellement, à la manière de l'Ancien Testament, comme celui du rétablissement de la justice (l'ensemble du chapitre 2; 3,10.13)⁽¹⁵⁾. Le jugement «ne chôme pas» (2,3), mais sa vérité est à venir (2,9). À propos de l'emploi de παρουσία dans l'expression de 3,12 προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, mise au compte des emplois «eschatologiques» par ceux qui plaident en faveur du sens «technique», on peut dire que, si l'expression globale «l'avènement du jour» renvoie manifestement à l'avenir, le mot important à cet égard est «le Jour», le jour de Dieu, le jour du jugement, παρουσία retrouvant le sens faible et banal de «venue».

Le choix n'est pas aussi simple qu'il paraît, et la facilité avec laquelle de nombreux modernes jugent que l'interprétation eschatologique s'est définitivement imposée surprend. La surprise est d'autant plus grande que beaucoup d'entre eux repoussent la rédaction de 2 Pierre à une date tardive, au moins la fin du 1^{er} siècle, et on se rapproche donc des emplois connus de parousie, au 2^{ème} siècle, pour l'incarnation. On peut saluer la pondération de E. Fuchs et P. Reymond qui, attentifs au poids des divers arguments, ne privilégient pas la lecture purement eschatologique et adoptent une solution «moyenne», non dépourvue de difficultés d'ailleurs. Ils voient dans παρουσία une référence aux deux venues du Christ: «Nous vous avons fait connaître, pour en avoir été témoins privilégiés, qu'il est venu et qu'il (re)viendra»⁽¹⁶⁾. Dans son récent commentaire, H. Paulsen emprunte une voie comparable. Tout en étant conscient qu'il s'écarte de la solution majoritaire, il juge que les versets 16-18 ont pour objet premier de fonder le message apostolique sur la parole de témoins. La grandeur du Seigneur établit un pont entre ce que les apôtres ont vu et ce message qui concerne aussi l'avenir. Selon Paulsen, si παρουσία a clairement le sens d'avènement futur dans les autres emplois de l'épître (cf. nos réserves pour 3,12!), ce n'est pas

⁽¹⁵⁾ A. VÖGTLE, *Der Judasbrief, der zweite Petrusbrief*, (EKK XXII; Solothurn-Düsseldorf – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1994) 165, mentionne une thèse soutenue à Bâle par J.L. SNYDER, *The Promise of his Coming. The Eschatology of 2 Peter* (San Mateo, CA 1986) montrant que l'intérêt de l'épître se fixe non pas tellement sur la parousie en elle-même mais plutôt sur la manifestation de la justice divine.

⁽¹⁶⁾ E. FUCHS – P. REYMOND, *La deuxième épître de saint Pierre. L'épître de saint Jude* (CNT XIIIb; Neuchâtel – Paris 1980) 68.

certain en 1,16. La notion de παρουσία, dit-il, tout en certifiant la valeur du message de l'Église relatif à un κύριος à venir, joue aussi un rôle pour l'existence terrestre de ce κύριος. Il retient donc une solution d'association: par ce mot, l'auteur réunit l'existence terrestre de Jésus, caractérisée comme μεγαλειότης, et son retour à la fin des temps⁽¹⁷⁾. Il sera précieux de voir si le texte de 1 P 1,10-12 peut aider dans la décision sur ce point.

b) La parole prophétique (1,19-21)

Le lien avec la section précédente, assuré par καί, le souligne, la préoccupation relative à la «Parole» faisant autorité demeure: après «ce que les apôtres ont fait connaître» (v. 16) l'attention se fixe maintenant sur la «parole prophétique». Avec la plupart des auteurs, nous considérons que προφητικὸς λόγος désigne l'ensemble de l'Ancien Testament, vu spécialement sous l'angle de l'annonce messianique. Le comparatif βεβαιότερον introduit-il une véritable comparaison entre les deux paroles ou encore l'idée d'une confirmation nécessaire de la parole prophétique⁽¹⁸⁾? C'est peu vraisemblable; l'épître aime unir plutôt que distinguer (3,2; 3,16). Il est donc préférable d'opter pour un comparatif absolu: «très ferme». À cette parole «qui est la solidité même» (TOB) et que nous possédons (ἔχομεν), il convient de «s'attacher» (προσέχοντες), de «prêter attention», d'«adhérer». Sur la manière dont il est recommandé d'honorer cette précieuse parole un développement est proposé qui emprunte le registre de l'illumination. Deux étapes au moins sont distinguées: dans la première étape la parole est semblable à une lampe qui brille, qui répand donc une certaine lumière, mais dans un lieu obscur. Ce n'est pas un truisme. L'idée est que le rayonnement est réel, mais faible, limité, laissant encore de profondes ténèbres. La deuxième étape, c'est l'apparition du jour: «jusqu'à ce que se lève le jour» (διαυγάζω: «commencer à poindre»). Comme si ce progrès majeur et cette victoire de la lumière n'était pas suffisamment qualifiés, intervient une autre indication, très poétique: «et que l'étoile du matin se lève dans vos cœurs» (φωσφόρος littéralement «qui porte la lumière», désigne Venus (TDNT 9, 312) qui accompagne les premières

⁽¹⁷⁾ H. PAULSEN, *Der 2 Petrusbrief*, (KEK; Göttingen 1992) 118. Pour la transfiguration, il voit son utilité dans la pensée de l'auteur avant tout comme «légitimation» du message apostolique dont la parousie future fait partie.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Des solutions ont été avancées qui établissent une comparaison. Ainsi l'idée d'une consolidation de l'annonce messianique dans la prophétie par la manifestation de la gloire divine du Christ lors de la transfiguration.

lueurs de l'aube; on peut donc considérer que l'étoile est associée à l'apparition du jour⁽¹⁹⁾.

Les auteurs qui optent pour une lecture eschatologique de *παρουσία* et de la mention de la transfiguration adoptent le même type d'interprétation pour l'apparition du jour, qui est alors le jour de l'Achèvement: la prophétie est utile jusqu'à la pleine révélation, accordée seulement à ce moment là. La difficulté réside alors dans la précision «dans vos cœurs». Spiritualisation et individualisation de l'eschatologie chrétienne primitive, ont pensé certains (Schelkle, Kelly, Frankemölle, etc.)⁽²⁰⁾. Mention des effets dans les cœurs du débordement de lumière dans la présence de Dieu, en raison de la parfaite révélation (Fornberg, Bauckham, etc.)⁽²¹⁾? Beaucoup ont reconnu que la lecture la plus naturelle voudrait que l'illumination soit une expérience de la vie présente; Bauckham cite dans ce sens Plumptre, Mayor, James, Spicq, Grundmann, Delling (*TDNT* 2, 953), Käsemann, (*Apologia*^[22]). Ainsi, une décision importante doit également être prise sur l'interprétation de l'image de la lumière et de son retentissement: vision des conséquences de la parousie future, ou expérience terrestre liée à la connaissance du Christ apportée par l'Évangile et par l'action de l'Esprit venant dévoiler la «parole prophétique»? Sur ce point également, l'aide éventuelle de 1 P 1,10-12 serait utile.

Reste à considérer les versets 20 et 21 qui prolongent la présentation de la prophétie. À nouveau, le lecteur doit faire des choix: s'il y a un large accord pour admettre que l'expression «la prophétie de l'Écriture» est une autre façon de viser «la parole prophétique», l'Ancien Testament pris globalement, et que *ἐπίλυσις* signifie «interprétation», «explication»⁽²³⁾, les esprits s'opposent sur l'identité de ceux qui pratiquent cette dernière. Les deux thèses jouent sur la

⁽¹⁹⁾ Cf BAUCKHAM, *Jude – 2 Peter*, 225. On voit généralement dans cette image un souvenir de Nombres 24,17, déjà interprété messianiquement dans le judaïsme.

⁽²⁰⁾ Ainsi H. FRANKEMÖLLE, *1 und 2 Petrusbrief* (NEB; Würzburg 1987) 99; il perçoit une réelle «créativité théologique» chez l'auteur qui donne une interprétation psychologique et individuelle aux métaphores apocalyptiques.

⁽²¹⁾ FORNBERG, *Early Church*, 85; BAUCKHAM, *Jude – 2 Peter*, 226. Pour BAUCKHAM, l'auteur attirerait l'attention sur un aspect de la parousie, à savoir que les croyants recevront alors la pleine révélation «dans leurs cœurs».

⁽²²⁾ E. KÄSEMANN, «An Apologia for Primitive Christian Eschatology», *Essays in New Testament Themes* (SBT 41; London 1964) 169-195.

⁽²³⁾ Cf. T.S. CURRAN, «The Teaching of II Peter 1.20. On the Interpretation of Prophecy», *TS* (1943/4) 351-352.

construction du verbe γίνομαι avec le génitif et sur la portée de l'adjectif ἰδίᾱς: 1) aucune prophétie d'Écriture ne relève d'une interprétation «particulière», «privée» (il s'agit alors d'une condamnation de l'interprétation illégitime de celui qui lit la prophétie); 2) aucune prophétie d'Écriture ne provient de l'interprétation propre des prophètes (c'est la production même de la prophétie qui est en cause: elle ne peut être simplement humaine). La première solution est retenue par le plus grand nombre de commentaires et de traductions⁽²⁴⁾, mais avec des différences dans la désignation de l'instance qui s'oppose à «particulier» ou «privé»: l'interprétation de l'Esprit, celle des apôtres, celle de la communauté en général, celle des autorités de l'Église⁽²⁵⁾. Mais il y a des adeptes convaincus de la deuxième solution (Bauckham, etc.), qui semble trouver un appui dans le verset 21 où l'origine non humaine mais divine de la prophétie est affirmée. Une difficulté toutefois réside dans le fait que l'idée d'origine s'exprimerait normalement au verset 20 au moyen de ἐκ devant le génitif ἐπιλύσεως. Le rapport avec le verset 21 soulève un autre problème, mais il affecte les deux solutions. Si l'on retient la mention d'une origine non humaine mais divine de la prophétie déjà au verset 20, le verset 21 paraît redondant (Bauckham juge qu'on peut échapper à cette conclusion, en considérant que 21b fournit la raison pour laquelle la prophétie n'est pas le produit d'une interprétation humaine)⁽²⁶⁾. Si, au verset 20, on retient l'interprétation de la prophétie par ses lecteurs (les remarques sur l'interprétation erronée des Écritures en 3,16 fournissant un bon appui), quel rapport peut exister avec le verset 21? Il est alors implicite: dire que l'interprétation juste de la prophétie n'est pas à la portée de l'homme livré à lui-même, c'est sous-entendre, à partir des thèses exprimées ailleurs dans l'épître,

⁽²⁴⁾ J.H. NEYREY, *2 Peter, Jude*, (AB; New York – London – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland 1993) 182: «Le problème en 1.20-21, cependant, n'est pas celui de l'origine de la prophétie mais son interprétation».

⁽²⁵⁾ Dans notre commentaire de 1994 (*La Deuxième de Pierre*, 125-129) nous avons avancé une solution un peu différente: ἰδίᾱς renvoyant à πᾶσα προφητεία, on peut comprendre: «toute prophétie d'Écriture ne relève pas de sa propre explication», ce qui signifie que la prophétie a besoin d'être éclairée par la révélation du Christ prêchée par les apôtres, avec le concours de l'Esprit Saint. Cette lecture correspond à la traduction par RUFIN des *Homélies sur le livre de Nombres* d'ORIGÈNE, qui cite ce texte: *Omnis propheteia non potest propria absolute constare*, que A. MÉHAT (SC 29; 374) traduit: «Toute prophétie ne peut conclure par elle-même» (cf. CURRAN, *The Teaching*, qui cite RUFIN, 360).

⁽²⁶⁾ BAUCKHAM, *Jude – 2 Peter*, 232-233.

qu'elle relève des apôtres (3,2), guidés par l'Esprit (aucune mention d'une autorité ecclésiastique). L'Esprit, qui est à l'origine de la prophétie, doit contrôler aussi sa lecture, par les instruments qu'il qualifie pour cela. On peut noter que le même problème se pose pour l'exhortation relative à Paul et à l'ensemble des «Écritures» en 3,15-16: la dénonciation des «ignares sans formation qui tordent le sens des Écritures» n'est pas suivie de la mention de l'autorité qui assurera l'interprétation correcte. Il faut donc tirer de ce qui suit immédiatement (3,17: «croissez dans la grâce et la connaissance de notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus Christ») et, plus généralement, des données de l'épître le fondement d'un enseignement correct. C'est la référence soutenue au rôle des apôtres (1,12-18; 3,2) qui fournit alors la meilleure solution, étant entendu qu'ils ont été non seulement «témoins du Christ» (1,16-18) mais aussi qu'ils ont reçu mission de transmettre la parole de vérité (1,12-15). On peut ajouter que l'association étroite entre prophètes et apôtres, en 3,2, permet d'étendre aux seconds le privilège des premiers: «être portés par l'Esprit».

On le constate, le texte de 2 P 1,16-21 est exigeant et oblige à des choix délicats.

3. *Correspondances*

Plusieurs auteurs notent, à côté de différences considérables, des points de contact entre les deux épîtres. C'est le cas, fréquemment, pour la valorisation de la «parole prophétique»⁽²⁷⁾. G.H. Boobyer, entre autres, ne manque pas de souligner l'intérêt commun pour l'inspiration de la prophétie (1 P 1,10-11 et 2 P 1,21). À propos de 2 P 1,16-21, il signale aussi la mention de la transfiguration, mais il trouve le parallèle en 1 P 5,1 («la gloire qui va être révélée»). Sa conclusion est ample: l'ensemble du premier chapitre de 2 Pierre, dans sa structure et dans le développement des idées, est redevable à 1 P 1,2-12 (en y ajoutant 5,1)⁽²⁸⁾. Kelly, après avoir souligné les différences, conclut néanmoins que l'auteur de 2 Pierre était familier avec 1 Pierre, à laquelle il prétend donner une suite. Il juge que Boobyer a montré que 2 Pierre reprend et développe plusieurs points⁽²⁹⁾. K.H. Schelkle fait également état de la recherche de

⁽²⁷⁾ E.M.B. GREEN, *2 Peter Reconsidered* (TynNTL; London 1960) se donne pour tâche de montrer l'ampleur des relations entre 1 Pierre et 2 Pierre.

⁽²⁸⁾ BOOBYER, *Indebtedness*, 43-53.

⁽²⁹⁾ KELLY, *Commentary*, 236.

Boobyer sur les correspondances⁽³⁰⁾. J. Chaîne serait prêt à admettre une certaine influence de 1 Pierre, en dépit d'une distance manifeste; il relève des rencontres ponctuelles au sujet de l'annonce prophétique et de l'autorité de l'enseignement des apôtres⁽³¹⁾. C. Spicq, analysant les rapports entre 2 Pierre et 1 Pierre, note, sans les développer, deux motifs communs: «l'importance accordée aux prophéties» (1 P 1,10-12; 2 P 1,19-21) et l'association prophètes-apôtres (1 P 1,12; 2 P 3,2)⁽³²⁾. N. Hillyer, dans la liste des similitudes, fait état de la correspondance entre 1 P 1,10-12 et 2 P 1,19-20, à propos de «l'accent sur la prophétie»⁽³³⁾. Le commentaire de Fuchs-Reymond mentionne seulement une évocation de 1 P 1,10-12 en 2 P 3,1 (le renvoi à la «première lettre»)⁽³⁴⁾. C'est J.H. Neyrey qui, dans sa liste des expressions communes, signale le plus clairement, sans développer, les affinités entre les deux passages que nous considérons, 1 P 1,10-12 et 2 P 1,16-21, mais seulement sous l'angle de la confirmation de l'inspiration prophétique⁽³⁵⁾. Bauckham est celui qui écarte avec le plus de vigueur l'influence de 1 Pierre sur 2 Pierre (si, comme il le pense, l'auteur est un collègue de Pierre, il n'a pas besoin, déclare-t-il, d'avoir recours à 1 Pierre s'il veut connaître la pensée de l'apôtre); le seul point de contact envisageable serait entre 1 P 3,20 et 2 P 2,5 et 3,9⁽³⁶⁾. Il admet cependant comme probable que l'auteur de 2 Pierre connaissait 1 Pierre.

Notre propos est plus ambitieux: voir si on ne perçoit pas plus clairement la cohérence de l'ensemble de 2 P 1,16-21 si l'on accueille l'aide de 1 P 1,10-12.

Le rapprochement qui s'impose le plus nettement, reconnu par beaucoup, s'établit entre 1 P 1,11 et 2 P 1,21, relativement à l'inspiration de la prophétie:

Les prophètes ...recherchaient les indications données par l'Esprit du Christ qui était en eux et qui attestait par avance les souffrances... (1 P 1,11)

mais c'est porté par l'Esprit Saint que des hommes ont parlé de la part de Dieu (2 P 1,21)

⁽³⁰⁾ K.H. SCHELKLE, *Die Petrus Briefe, Der Judas Brief* (HTKNT 13/2; Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1961) 222.

⁽³¹⁾ J. CHAÎNE, *Les épîtres catholiques* (EB; Paris 1939) 81.

⁽³²⁾ SPICQ, *Les épîtres*, 188.

⁽³³⁾ N. HILLYER, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* (NIBC; Peabody, MA 1992) 15.

⁽³⁴⁾ FUCHS-REYMOND, *Saint Pierre – Saint Jude*, 30.

⁽³⁵⁾ NEYREY, *2 Peter – Jude*, 134-135.

⁽³⁶⁾ Pour BAUCKHAM, *Jude – 2 Peter*, 160 et 286, 1 Pierre est mentionné en 3,1 essentiellement parce que les destinataires connaissaient l'œuvre.

La formulation est autre, mais la conviction est identique. Ce point de contact évident incite à l'examen du verset 20 qui, en 2 Pierre 1, non seulement précède immédiatement la parole sur l'inspiration des prophètes, mais entretient manifestement un rapport avec elle. À son propos, nous l'avons constaté, se pose la question: mise en garde contre l'interprétation «particulière» de la prophétie par ses lecteurs ou polémique contre l'idée que sa production serait œuvre humaine, l'interprétation des prophètes eux-mêmes? Pour aider à la trancher, il faut considérer l'ensemble de la section 19-21, avec, au verset 19, l'image de la lumière et de ses deux étapes successives. Il est frappant que 1 P 1,10-12 marque aussi ces deux étapes, à sa manière, sans user du symbolisme de l'illumination: une première étape où les mystères de la prophétie laissent les croyants et même les prophètes dans une sorte de pénombre, malgré les efforts pour comprendre, et une deuxième étape où l'annonce de l'Évangile d'un Christ manifesté projette, avec le concours de l'Esprit, les clartés désirables. La séquence clairement inscrite en 1 Pierre incite alors à envisager une séquence analogue en 2 Pierre, ce qui conduit à reconnaître également en 2 P 1,19, dans les deux stades de l'illumination, le contraste en un «autrefois», où la lampe de la prophétie brille, mais faiblement, et un «maintenant» où la venue du Christ «étoile du matin» (la première venue!) inonde les «cœurs» de sa lumière. La structure claire de 1 P 1,10-12 suggère une structure identique en 2 Pierre, favorisant l'option «non eschatologique». La succession n'est pas: obscurité actuelle de la prophétie puis dévoilement au dernier Jour, mais obscurité relative de la prophétie jusqu'à l'annonce de l'Évangile qui révèle la Personne et l'œuvre du Christ. Ce choix permet de donner à l'expression «dans vos cœurs» du verset 19 un sens parfaitement naturel: l'Esprit du Christ accompagne la prophétie portée par l'Évangile et fait pénétrer le message au plus profond de l'être humain.

Si l'on accepte cette correspondance, on sera guidé dans le choix qui porte sur le verset 20: c'est l'idée d'interprétation correcte de la prophétie par ses utilisateurs qui convient le mieux. En effet, 1 P 1,10-12 pose le problème d'une lecture plénière de l'Ancien Testament. Avec la meilleure volonté, les prophètes eux-mêmes ne pouvaient y parvenir. Il faut la parole apostolique, après la révélation du Christ et l'intervention de l'Esprit, pour atteindre le but. On peut penser que le même souci se fait jour en 2 P 1,20: pas d'interprétation privée, particulière, mais celle des apôtres soutenus par l'Esprit.

À propos du rapport entre les versets 20 et 21, la solution d'une

référence à l'interprétation de l'Écriture par ses lecteurs au verset 20 trouve aussi un appui dans la double mention de l'Esprit en 1 P 1,10-12: l'Esprit qui, d'abord, «atteste dans l'esprit des prophètes» accompagne ensuite la prédication de l'Évangile. Le même Esprit préside donc à la production de la prophétie puis à sa clarification et à son application dans la prédication chrétienne. En 2 P 1,20-21, on a la même réalité, la permanence de l'action de l'Esprit, mais dans une séquence inversée: la nécessité d'une interprétation correcte de la prophétie, v. 20, et ceci en fonction de l'origine de celle-ci (v. 21: les prophètes ont parlé portés par l'Esprit, de la part de Dieu)⁽³⁷⁾. J.C. Margot exprime bien cette logique: «La soumission à l'Esprit de Dieu étant à l'origine de la prophétie, la même soumission conditionne également la compréhension et l'interprétation de la Parole de Dieu»⁽³⁸⁾.

Nous venons de considérer le concours que peut apporter le texte de 1 Pierre à la lecture de la section 1 P 1,19-21. La section 16-18 peut-elle en bénéficier également? On remarque l'association étroite, dans les deux textes pris globalement (1 P 1,10-12 et 2 P 1,16-21) entre parole prophétique et parole apostolique. En 1 P 1,10-12 l'ordre est «parole prophétique» puis «paroles apostoliques», alors qu'en 2 P 1,16-21 l'ordre est inversé, mais l'association demeure et sa force est confirmée en 3,2, où la parole de «vos apôtres» prolonge celle des «saints prophètes», et encore en 3,15-16 où les lettres de Paul, bien que celui-ci ne soit pas qualifié d'apôtre, sont rangées parmi «les Écritures». L'accent placé sur ce lien entre parole des apôtres et parole des prophètes va dans le sens de la thèse selon laquelle en 2 P 1,16-18 l'intention de l'auteur n'est pas tellement de défendre déjà l'eschatologie primitive centrée sur la parousie, mais bien plutôt de plaider pour l'autorité de la prédication apostolique. Ces apôtres ont été témoins directs du Christ: ils n'ont pas raconté des fables, comme les adversaires le prétendent, ils ont été «aux côtés du Christ sur la montagne», ils ont vu, ils ont entendu de leurs oreilles de chair la voix

⁽³⁷⁾ Il est vrai que la deuxième de Pierre, si elle reconnaît pleinement l'autorité de la parole apostolique, ne mentionne pas clairement le rôle de l'Esprit dans cette autorité et son efficacité. On note toutefois l'expression employée pour Paul en 3,15: «avec la sagesse qui lui a été donnée». Cette «sagesse» ne serait-elle pas un autre nom de l'Esprit? L'idée d'une lumière qui pénètre désormais les «cœurs» évoquait déjà au verset 20 cette intériorisation qui est l'œuvre particulière de l'Esprit.

⁽³⁸⁾ J.C. MARGOT, *Les épîtres de Pierre* (Genève 1960) 110.

divine qui attestait sa filialité unique. Ils ont droit à promouvoir «la juste manière de penser» (3,1), à énoncer le «commandement du Seigneur et Sauveur» (3,2), en tant que témoins et «envoyés». Si l'on retient cet intérêt fondamental pour la solidité de la Parole, celle des apôtres puis celle des prophètes, on optera pour l'interprétation non eschatologique de *παρουσία* et de la mention de la transfiguration, cette dernière étant vue d'abord comme une manifestation terrestre de gloire, accessible à la perception humaine, avant d'être, secondairement, une sorte d'anticipation de la parousie future.

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* *

Ainsi, 2 P 1,16-21 nous paraît être, de même que 1 P 1,10-12, une section consacrée à la pose du fondement de la foi, la Parole relative au Christ. Affirmer la solidité de ce fondement est d'autant plus important en 2 Pierre que l'auteur va se lancer (chapitres 2 et 3) dans une vigoureuse dénonciation d'erreurs qui procèdent d'oubli et d'interprétations erronées de la Parole, des Écritures anciennes comme des nouvelles (les lettres de Paul, entre autres). Établir des correspondances entre ces deux passages, c'est, à l'évidence, privilégier une lecture non-eschatologique de 2 P 1,16-21, puisque 1 P 1,10-12 n'implique pas une référence directe à l'eschatologie. Certes, l'eschatologie n'est pas absente du texte de 1 Pierre: elle s'inscrit dans la notion de salut, telle qu'elle a été développée en 1,3-9 et reprise en 1,10a, elle est une des composantes du message prophétique («les gloires destinées au Christ») et donc du message apostolique qui le prolonge et le clarifie. Mais l'eschatologie n'est pas un centre d'intérêt spécifique en 1,10-12. Les distinctions temporelles y sont: «autrefois», le temps de l'investigation du mystère, et «maintenant», celui de la proclamation à l'Église. De même, parler de lecture non-eschatologique de 2 P 1,16-21 ne signifie pas davantage une polarisation totale sur la condition terrestre du Christ. L'insistance sur son «l'éclat», sur «l'honneur et la gloire» du transfiguré bénéficiaire de l'approbation céleste laissent entrevoir un futur rayonnant. Mais en 16-18, c'est la vérité du témoignage apostolique qui est en cause et non pas l'attestation eschatologique. On peut ici introduire une remarque portant sur l'eschatologie dans l'ensemble de l'épître. Sans adhérer à la thèse excessive de E. Käsemann pour qui l'auteur défend une eschatologie dont il s'est éloigné et qu'il ne comprend plus, on doit remarquer que la ligne maîtresse n'est pas tellement la parousie comme rencontre de l'Église avec son Seigneur glorifié, mais plutôt un bouleversement où

la justice divine, déjà à l'œuvre dans le monde, se manifestera puissamment (chapitres 2 et 3; cf., en particulier, 3,12-13).

Notre conviction est que l'interprétation de 2 P 1,16-21 suggérée par le texte de 1 P 1,10-12 fournit une lecture cohérente qui trouve une place heureuse dans la structure de 2 Pierre. Ce n'est qu'un élément à prendre en considération quand on réfléchit à l'origine de la deuxième de Pierre. Toutes les solutions proposées à cet égard, sans exception, ont à affronter cette difficulté majeure: comment comprendre qu'une œuvre qui se réclame de Pierre et se présente comme une «deuxième lettre» paraisse si éloignée de 1 Pierre, tout en présentant des correspondances, dont la plus ample est celle que nous venons d'exposer.

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SUMMARY

It is commonly agreed that the Second Epistle of Peter evinces a knowledge of the First Epistle of Peter (cf 2 P 3,1), but the degree of the influence upon the Second Epistle is assessed differently. This study endeavours to show that the difficult text of 2 P 1,16-21, in which the witness of the apostles is associated with the «prophetic word», becomes clearer and more coherent when a connection is set with 1 P 1,10-12.

A Touch of Support: Ps 3,6 and the Psalmist's Experience (*)

A short and apparently 'conventional' instance of the individual prayer⁽¹⁾, Psalm 3 presents the reader with an exegetical challenge that is characteristic of Psalm criticism. This challenge has its focus in v. 6 ("I lay down and slept, I awoke for the Lord supports me"), but it affects the interpretation of the whole psalm, as evident from the fact that it was labeled a "morning hymn"⁽²⁾ or thought to reflect an incubation ritual⁽³⁾. Recently these characterizations have been rejected in favour of a different interpretation that also takes its cue from v. 6, namely that Psalm 3 is a hymn of confidence composed when the psalmist awoke in the middle of the night following a dream oracle in which he experienced Yahweh's support⁽⁴⁾. As shown below, this theory has its appeal, but it falters somewhat upon closer examination of its textual and comparative evidence. Moreover, data gathered from reports of theophany elsewhere in the Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature would seem to yield a slightly different impression. Should the psalmist's experience be subjected to yet another 'restoration' attempt or would it be more honest to concede that its private⁽⁵⁾,

(*) In remembrance of professor Zeev Weisman — teacher, colleague and friend — who sadly passed away on 28 December 2004, after a brave struggle with illness.

(¹) Cp. K. SEYBOLD, *Introducing the Psalms* (translated by R. Graeme Dunphy) (Edinburgh 1990) 64-65: "The language of this simple prayer smacks of everyday colloquial usage [a style of prayer that] epitomizes the Psalms of the Individual". According to J.S. KSELMAN, "Psalm 3: A Structural and Literary Study", *CBQ* 49 (1987) 572, "the conventionality and familiarity of its language and motifs" are among the reasons for a scholarly "lack of interest" in this psalm.

(²) B. DUHM, *Die Psalmen* (KHAT 14; Freiburg i.B. 1899) 12; C.A. & E.G. BRIGGS, *The Book of Psalms* (ICC 16; New York 1906-1907) I, 24; P.C. CRAIGIE, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco, TX 1983) 70, 72, 75; Cp. A. WEISER, *The Psalms* (OTL; Philadelphia 1962) 116, 118.

(³) S. MOWINCKEL, *Psalmenstudien* (Kristiania 1921-1924; repr. Amsterdam 1966) I, 156-157. See below, note 13 for more detail.

(⁴) C. SCHROEDER, "Psalm 3 und das Traumorakel des von Feinden bedrängten Beters", *Bib* 81 (2000) 243-251, esp. 245-246, 249. Contrary to the impression given by Schroeder (*ibid.*, n. 2), the definition "morning hymn" (as well as "incubation") was rejected by H. GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen 1968) 13.

(⁵) The reference to sleeping and waking suggests a private and individual experience, even if it were certain that the psalmist was a public figure, as some

elusive nature defies any such attempt? In what follows each of these attitudes is given due consideration.

1. *Ps 3,6 in Context: 'Ritual' or 'Spiritual'?*

Psalm 3 opens with the poet's complaint about his numerous foes (v. 2) and about the many who say that he has no prospect of deliverance by God (v. 3). The latter are usually taken to be the foes of v. 2, but could also be the proverbial 'friends' with whom one needs no enemies⁽⁶⁾. This twofold complaint sets the keynote for the main theme of deliverance by God in defiance of the numerous enemies and discouraging friends (vv. 4.7.8). Parallels and echoes between the initial lament (vv. 2-3) and the confident conclusion (vv. 7-8) bring out this progression from distress and despair to hope and salvation. Thus the triple use of the root רבב (be many) in relation to all those who threaten the psalmist (vv. 2-3) is echoed by the phrase רבבות עם, the multitude of people surrounding him whom he can now face without fear (v. 7). In describing the relation of the multitude to himself (v. 7) he uses the same prepositional phrase as in his initial complaint about the enemies: עלִי against me (v. 2)⁽⁷⁾. His appeal for Yahweh's deliverance (v. 8a) is couched in the same terms as the negation of such deliverance by the 'friends' (v. 3b), namely the root ישע with אלהים⁽⁸⁾. All such parallels and correspondences go to show the transformation undergone by the speaker: The numerous enemies and calumniators who rendered him powerless are the very ones he can suddenly face without fear, confidently awaiting the divine intervention that will render *them* powerless. God's deliverance which was belied him is precisely that for which he prays.

Now, it stands to reason that the text between the two counterbalanced parts, vv. 2-3 and vv. 7-8, would refer to the way in which

interpreters would have it. See note 7. In any case, v. 6 is hardly amenable to the national reading (a collective "I" personifying the nation) proposed by M. BUTTENWEISER, *The Psalms*. Chronologically Treated with a New Translation (New York 1969) 397-398.

⁽⁶⁾ For this possibility (treacherous friends) see WEISER, *The Psalms*, 117.

⁽⁷⁾ This may well suggest identity or close relation between the multitude and the enemies. The great numbers and the quasi-military picture (cp. 2 Chr 20) have indicated to some interpreters that the speaker is a king (e.g. BRIGGS, *ibid.*; WEISER, *ibid.*), a high priest or a military leader (DUHM, *Die Psalmen*, 11-13). On the attribution and rejection of these views see also GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen*, 13.

⁽⁸⁾ Some of these and other echoes and parallels were noted by KSELMAN, "Psalm 3", 577-578; CRAIGIE, *Psalms 1-50*, 71; Y. AVISHUR, *Psalms* (ed. N.H. SARNA) (The World of the Bible; Tel Aviv 1995) I, 33-34 [Hebrew].

this transformation came about. Indeed, vv. 4-5 seem to bear out this expectation: In contrast to the cruel verdict of his fellow men (v. 3) the poet asserts his confidence in God's power to protect and to elevate him (v. 4)⁽⁹⁾, relating that he cried to YHWH who answered him "from his holy mountain" (v. 5)⁽¹⁰⁾.

What purpose may be served by the reference to the psalmist's sleeping and waking in this context? A fair answer to this question should take account of the following factors: (I) As mentioned, the reference to sleeping and waking in v. 6 follows immediately upon a report of a successful invocation of Yahweh (v. 5) — an odd sequence, unless it is supposed to represent a real sequence of events. In this case v. 6 may be seen as further elaboration on the circumstances of the divine response stated only generally in v. 5. In any case the setting of v. 6 entitles us to see in it part of a personal experience that became the turning point in the mood and circumstances of the psalmist: I, for my part, just lay down and slept, and I awoke to YHWH's support. This reading helps explain also why (II) the subject in v. 6 ("I") is emphatic⁽¹¹⁾: Thus the small, almost banal, part played by the psalmist himself in accomplishing his deliverance (v. 6a) is juxtaposed with the crucial part played by God (v. 6b; cp. also v. 4). This reading also fits in with (III) the special significance sensed in *הקיצותי* (I awoke). A natural corollary of sleeping, the waking here is nevertheless

⁽⁹⁾ The contrast is expressed by the initial adversative Waw, often translated "but" (e.g. RSV: "*But* thou, O Lord, art a shield about me"; cp. LXX σὺ δέ, κύριε), as well as by the emphatic vocative *אתה* ("thou") suggesting opposition to the preceding clause, in this case to the threats and hostile utterances against the psalmist.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Some interpreters take v. 5a as an iterative temporal clause e.g. "When I cry aloud to Yahweh, he answers me from his holy hill" (H.-J. KRAUS, *Psalms 1-59. A Continental Commentary* [Minneapolis 1993] 136-137; Cp. BUTTENWEISER, *The Psalms*, 396, 401) or a conditional one (GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen*, 14 followed by M. DAHOOD, *Psalms* [AB 16; Garden City, N. Y. 1966] I, 15, 19), but this requires a slight emendation in v. 5b (*וַיַּעַנְי* – cp. Gunkel; Kraus; BHS; Dahood differs). MT *וַיַּעַנְי* (he answered me) favors historic past, although v. 5a can still be taken as iterative (past): The psalmist recalls how he repeatedly cried to God and how his prayer was finally answered (BRIGGS, *Psalms*, 24-25, 27). LXX extends the historic interpretation also to other parts of the psalm (vv. 2a, 6a), so that it "reads more like a description of a past incident than does MT". Thus A. PIETERSMA, "When David Fleed Abessalom: A Commentary on the Third Psalm in Greek", *Emanuel. Studies in the Hebrew Bible Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. S.M. PAUL ET AL.) (Leiden – Boston 2003) 647.

⁽¹¹⁾ This is usual when a personal pronoun indicating the subject is placed before a conjugated verb. See GK §§ 32b, 135a.

mentioned at the beginning of a new clause⁽¹²⁾ and linked to a divine gesture or intervention (יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי) by the conjunction כִּי indicating a causative or temporal relation. This special emphasis is perhaps due to the fact that only upon waking does the poet become aware of God's positive involvement. (IV) The precise nature of the divine gesture or intervention intended by יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי and its relation to the waking of the psalmist has to be determined. If the relation is causal then the verb סָמַךְ (Qal, imperfect) should perhaps be taken as a historic past, although it is usually and more naturally rendered as durative present. (V) Possibly connected to these issues is the supposed break in v. 8: The poet appeals to Yahweh to rise and act on his behalf, and then goes on to suggest that God has already crushed the wicked enemies.

As often in Psalm interpretation, opinions on these issues are divided between proponents of different basic approaches that can be roughly characterized as 'ritual' (or 'institutional') and 'spiritual'.

The 'ritual' approach typically takes the sleeping and waking as part of a rite such as temple incubation, which would bring a petitioner to spend the night in the temple "in order to gain there a dream-theophany concerning his ailment (Krankheit)"⁽¹³⁾. If this rite brought about the psalmist's reversal of fortune, this may well explain the very mention of sleeping and waking in the midst of the crisis as well as the special emphasis on the waking (I and III above). However, an "ailment" is not borne out by the text of this psalm⁽¹⁴⁾. Neither are

(12) GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen*, 14 would have the main pause after נָאִישְׁנָה (I slept) "gegen die Akzente". It seems, however, that the accents do reflect the same division, the disjunctive accent עולה ויורד indicating the principal pause.

(13) MOWINCKEL, *Psalmstudien* I, 155. Apart from Ps 3,6 Mowinckel considered Ps 4,9; 17,15; 63,3,7; 91,1,5 as possible allusions to temple incubation, but others have raised objections regarding some of these scriptures: E.L. EHRLICH, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW 73; Berlin 1953) 51-52; A. CAQUOT, "Les songes et leur interprétation selon Canaan et Israël", *Les songes et leur interprétation* (ed. S. SAUNERON ET AL.) (Sources orientales 2; Paris 1959) 116; J. LINDBLOM, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion", *HUCA* 32 (1961), 104; J.-M. HUSSER, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* (Sheffield 1999) 174-175. R.J. Tournay has more on later scholars who adopted or opposed this line of interpretation in Psalm 3; See R.J. TOURNAY, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms*. The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (JSOTSS 118; Sheffield 1991) 191-192.

(14) For the idea that "the poet in Psalm 3 is perhaps sick" see also L. DELEKAT, *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum*. Eine Untersuchung zu den privaten Feindpsalmen (Leiden 1967) 52. However, MOWINCKEL, *Psalmstudien* I, 154-155 did not define Psalm 3 as "a sickness psalm" as he did e.g. Psalms 6 and 28 (ibid. 149, 151).

some of the ordeals and judiciary procedures included in other hypotheses within the 'ritual' approach⁽¹⁵⁾. Moreover, it has been argued that the text of Psalm 3 does not even support a temple (incubatory or other) setting, because God's response is said to come "from his holy mountain", implying that the psalmist is somewhere else⁽¹⁶⁾. To be sure, v. 5 can also be read in a way that is consistent with the psalmist's presence in the temple⁽¹⁷⁾, although admittedly it does not prove such presence. The supposed break in v. 8 (V above) has attracted other 'ritual' explanations, such as a priestly oracle or a divine verdict presumed to have stood between the call "Arise, O Lord! Deliver me" etc. and the sequel that refers to the smiting of the enemies with perfect verbal forms⁽¹⁸⁾.

The 'spiritual' approach, typically takes the sleeping and waking as *peaceful* sleeping and waking, a sign of Yahweh's grace and protection with which the poet encourages himself, as in

⁽¹⁵⁾ E.g. the sleep ordeal proposed by H. SCHMIDT, *Das Gebet des Angeklagten im Alten Testament* (BZAW 49; Berlin – New York 1928) 21-26 and DELEKAT, *Asylie und Schutzorakel*, 51-53; the temple judicial procedure culminating with a cultic theophany in the morning proposed by W. BEYERLIN, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* (FRLANT 99; Göttingen 1970) esp. 75-84; the nocturnal wine drinking ordeal proposed by K. VAN DER TOORN, "Ordeal Procedures and the Passover Meal", VT 38 (1988) 427-445. VAN DER TOORN, "Ordeal Procedures", 427-429 and SCHROEDER, "Psalm 3", 244-245 review the proposals mentioned in this and the following two notes with more detail.

⁽¹⁶⁾ E.S. GERSTENBERGER, *Psalms*. Part I. With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry (FOTL 14; Grand Rapids, MI 1988) 53; SCHROEDER, "Psalm 3", 249. Gerstenberger defines the setting as "a prayer service on behalf of a suffering individual" arguing that the ceremony did not take place in the temple precinct itself, and "must have been more private in nature, although supervised and conducted by a recognized liturgist".

⁽¹⁷⁾ BEYERLIN, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten*, 81 understood v. 5 in terms of the distance between the source of the divine oracle (in the holy of holies with its sacred rock) and the position of the petitioner (the forecourt of the temple). Cp. LINDBLOM, "Theophanies in Holy Places", 104.

⁽¹⁸⁾ J. BEGRICH, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel", ZAW 52 (1934) 81-92, esp. 84 and 88 where the change of mood in v. 7 is also attributed to the same priestly oracle; BEYERLIN, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten*, 77-78 put forward a more judicial type of intervention between the two parts of v. 8, namely the announcement of the divine verdict. Others took v. 8b figuratively: DELEKAT, *Asylie und Schutzorakel*, 52-53; cf. VAN DER TOORN, "Ordeal Procedures", 431, n. 14.

Ps 4,9⁽¹⁹⁾. This comparison is not entirely satisfactory, though. Whereas in Ps 4,9 the poet's peaceful sleep, attributed to divine protection, brings the psalm to its serene close, the sleep in Ps 3,6 is not qualified as peaceful, nor does it strike a concluding note. Rather, it builds up towards the awakening (III above), which goes unmentioned in Psalm 4. Finally, this interpretation leaves Ps 3,6 somewhat isolated in its context of crisis: Why would the psalmist, hard pressed by his enemies, single out his sleep and awakening as a token of divine grace? What would this have to do with the immediately preceding report that he cried to YHWH and was answered "from his holy mountain" (v. 5)?

There is, to be sure, one reading of Psalm 3 which brings it somewhat closer to Psalm 4 and its presentation of the psalmist's peaceful sleep as the ultimate expression of divine protection. This is Pap. Ryl. 461 (Rahlfs 2057), a 6th century Greek parchment of unknown provenance containing parts of Ps 3,4.5.7.9.6 followed by Ps 62,2.4.5⁽²⁰⁾. In this text v. 6 is placed at the end of Psalm 3, after v. 9. Although perhaps not fully intentional⁽²¹⁾ the misplacement seems to fit in with the characterization of the text as a protective amulet⁽²²⁾. Text-critically, however, the uniqueness of this arrangement of v. 6 coupled with other features of Ryl. 461 which indicate that it is not a proper Psalter manuscript, renders its testimony practically valueless⁽²³⁾.

⁽¹⁹⁾ GUNKEL, *Die Psalmen*, 13; DUHM, *Die Psalmen*, 11-12; BRIGGS, *Psalms*, 25; Cp. WEISER, *The Psalms*, 118. According to BUTTENWEISER, *The Psalms*, 398-399, 402, 404 the parallel in Ps 4,9 has "more weight, since Psalm 4 is a companion piece to Psalm 3" from the hand of the same author. Cp. DUHM.

⁽²⁰⁾ Text: *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library Manchester III: Theological and Literary Texts* (Nos. 457-551) (ed. C.H. ROBERTS) (Manchester 1938) 13-15; Rahlfs number and description: *Two Manuscripts of the Greek Psalter in the Chester Beatty Library Dublin* (ed. A. PIETERSMA) (Analecta biblica 77; Rome 1978) 7. I am grateful to Prof. Albert Pietersma for his patient guidance in the readings and import of this text as well as for his permission to quote from our correspondence (notes 22, 23 below), and to Prof. Emanuel Tov for referring me to Prof. Pietersma.

⁽²¹⁾ According to ROBERTS, *Catalogue*, 15, "there is nothing to indicate that the scribe recognized that this verse was out of place".

⁽²²⁾ For this characterization see ROBERTS, *Catalogue*, 13. Pietersma prefers the definition "lectionary": "A brief text with unusual psalm order and without title may be a lectionary rather than an amulet".

⁽²³⁾ The other indicators as to the nature of Ryl. 461, according to Pietersma, are: (a) the sequence of Psalms 3 + 62 and (b) the omission of the superscription of Psalm 62. Together they "point in a single direction: that Ryl. 461 is not a

To summarize, the ‘ritual’ approach can provide more satisfactory explanations for the position and context of v. 6 and for the special emphasis on the awakening (I and III above), and it offers interesting, though not absolutely essential, explanations for the supposed break in v. 8 (V above), but it cannot prove the poet’s presence in the temple from the language of v. 5. The ‘spiritual’ approach is less satisfactory in the former respects (especially I and III), but it can more easily avoid reading into the text elements that are difficult to prove.

In such circumstances it is natural to look for a middle course that would benefit from the advantages of each approach and avoid its weaknesses. Such a middle course may relate v. 6 to a dream oracle, still regarding it as a special ‘turning point’ encounter with the divine (as the ritual approach), but eliminate the temple setting and the notion of incubation (as the spiritual approach)⁽²⁴⁾. The dream is a general type of revelation that can occur anywhere and does not require a visit to a temple. This definition is conducive to a more personal rendering of the psalmist’s experience, releasing it from the cultic framework imposed by proponents of the ritual approach. So for instance the break in v. 8, rather than be filled with hypothetical oracles or rituals, can be given a personal explanation: The psalmist appeals to Yahweh to bring about (v. 8a) the triumph that he has already glimpsed in his dream (v. 8b) and naturally took for some form of reality⁽²⁵⁾.

It now remains to be seen whether the notion of Psalm 3 as a reflection of a theophanic dream is indeed more convincing or accurate than the hypotheses it is meant to replace, such as the incubation ritual.

2. *Dream Terminology and ‘Liminal (Dream?) Reports’*

One peculiarity for which the dream hypothesis has to account in Psalm 3 (or, for that matter, in any other text with similar features)⁽²⁶⁾ is the absence of explicit, basic terms for dreams and dreaming (חלום, חלם). An unequivocal dream statement that uses at least one such term is integral to many dream reports in the Bible (e.g. Gen 20,3; 28,12; 31,10.11.24; 37,5.6.9; 40,5.8.9.16; 41,1.5.7.17.22; 1Kgs 3,5; Judg

biblical ms [...]. While it tells us something about reception history, it tells us nothing about original text, whether Hebrew or Greek”.

⁽²⁴⁾ SCHROEDER, “Psalm 3”, 245-251.

⁽²⁵⁾ Ibid., 248-249.

⁽²⁶⁾ I.e. reports of encounters with the divine during sleep and/or at night that do not use dream terms, e.g. Num 22,20; 1 Sam 3. See below.

7,13; Dan 2,1-3; 7,1) and in ancient Near Eastern literature⁽²⁷⁾. Nevertheless, reports of theophanies and divine messages that exhibit some dream-like features (e.g. nocturnal timing, reference to sleeping or to waking) but lack explicit dream terminology are sufficiently widespread and significant a phenomenon to merit some consideration. Elsewhere I have used the title 'liminal reports' for such threshold cases⁽²⁸⁾.

Liminal reports can be categorized according to the recipients of the theophany or divine word: (1) Patriarchs: Gen 15; 21,12-13; 22,1-2; 26,24; 46,1-5; (2) National leaders: Judg 6,25-26; 7,9-11; 1 Chr 1,7; (3) Prophets and apocalyptic visionaries: Num 22,20; 1 Sam 3; 15,10-12a; 2 Sam 7,4; 24,11-13; 1 Kgs 19,9-18; Jer 31,26; Zech 1,8; 4,1; Dan 8,17-18; 10,9; (4) Sages: Job 4,12-21; (5) Psalmists: Ps 17,3.15; 3,6 — the passage under discussion. The list — though not exhaustive⁽²⁹⁾ — reveals the incidence of the phenomenon in a variety of types and genres in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the prominence of its prophetic affiliation.

Although their distribution, terminology and other characteristics differ from those of dream reports, liminal reports are often (and all too easily, as it seems to me) labeled 'dreams', the absence of dream terms sometimes dismissed as inexplicable and the presence of elements that indicate wakefulness practically ignored⁽³⁰⁾. Since many of these

⁽²⁷⁾ A.L. OPPENHEIM, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society n.s. 46/3; Philadelphia 1956) 179-373. Oppenheim's collection of "dream-reports from ancient Near Eastern sources" (ibid., 245-255) has 33 excerpts. In 29 of them a dream statement can be found.

⁽²⁸⁾ R. FIDLER, "The Shiloh Theophany (I Samuel 3): A Study of a Liminal Report", *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division A: The Bible and its World (Jerusalem 1999) 99-107 [Hebrew]. Further discussion of this subject will be found in my forthcoming book *Dreams Speak Falsely? Dream Theophanies in the Bible – Their Place in Ancient Israelite Faith and Tradition* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem) [Hebrew], esp. in chapter 6.

⁽²⁹⁾ On other possible cases in the Psalms see above, note 13. On other prophetic passages (Isa 21,1-4; Ezek 24,15-21) see J.-M. HUSSER, *Le songe et la parole. Etude sur le rêve et sa fonction dans l'ancien Israël* (BZAW 210; Berlin – New York 1994) 186, 228-230.

⁽³⁰⁾ EHRlich, *Der Traum im AT*, 135, considered the absence of dream terms in Gen 21,17-19; 22,1-2; 26,24; Num 22,9-13.20-21 inexplicable. Gnuse's insistence that 1 Sam 3 reports a "dream theophany" of Samuel plays down some of the signs of wakefulness in vv. 5-10. See R.K. GNUSE, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel* (New York – London 1984) 140-152.

reports have both dreamlike and wakeful traits it would perhaps be more rewarding to look into the reasons for this duality than to provide definitions that account for only one of its two aspects and that are therefore bound to be somewhat arbitrary. A proper discussion of all or even most of the scriptures listed above is beyond the scope of this article, so the brief comments that follow are limited to one case of each category.

(1) Gen 15: In vv. 1-6 the stars (v. 5) indicate nighttime, but taking Abraham out (of his tent?) to look at the night sky shows that he is thought to be awake. Comparable wakeful activities occur in two liminal reports in the prophetic category (3): 1 Sam 3,5-10 (see below) and 1 Kgs 19,11. Indeed, Gen 15 is not too remote from this category: the use of the word advent formula (vv. 1.4) and the definition במחזיה ("in a vision", v. 1) show that Abraham is portrayed in quasi-prophetic terms. In vv. 7-18 the twilight (vv. 12.17) and the term תרדמה (v. 12) can be associated with dreaming, especially in view of Job 33,15; but more often than not תרדמה denotes unusual, divinely induced sleep (Gen 2,21; 1 Sam 26,12) or prophetic stupor (Is 29,10; Job 4,13 [?]; cp. the use of the verb in Dan 8,18. The latter two reports exhibit some structural parallels to Gen 15). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Abraham's תרדמה was introduced as a 'prophetic' state fit for receiving the oracle in vv. 13-16⁽³¹⁾.

(2) 1 Chr 1,7: This rendering of Solomon's experience in Gibeon as a nocturnal theophany rather than as a dream (cp. 1 Kgs 3,5.15), suggests that such liminal reports may have evolved from what were proper dream reports in earlier stages of transmission, conditioned by the lexical choice and religious preference of more scrupulous authors — the Chronicler, in this case⁽³²⁾. Some interpreters refer to the denunciation of dreams in later literature (esp. Jer 23,25-32; 27,9-10; 29,8-9; Zech 10,2; cp. also Qoh 4,17-5,6; Sir 31,1-8; 40,5-7) as the ideological background of such maneuvers⁽³³⁾.

⁽³¹⁾ C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 12-36* (Minneapolis 1985) ad loc.; note also the rendering ἄσπετας in LXX.

⁽³²⁾ The chronicler avoids the root חלם altogether, a datum already linked to possibly negative feelings on the subject (EHRICH, *Der Traum im AT*, 22).

⁽³³⁾ R.B. DILLARD, *2 Chronicles* (WBC 15; Waco, TX 1987) 12 as a possibility; S. JAPHET, *I-II Chronicles. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY 1993) 530; Cp. M. ROBINSON, *Dreams in the Old Testament* (Ph.D. dissertation; The University of Manchester 1987) 233. Other explanations for the omission of the dream terminology cited by Dillard refer to the Chronicler's attempt to abridge the passage or to enhance the status of Solomon.

(3) 1 Sam 3: Spending the night in the temple of Shiloh near “the Ark of God” (v. 3) Samuel seems to set the stage for an incubation dream. But as the story unfolds it reveals that this is far removed from his intentions (vv. 5-10). The divine call that repeatedly wakes him he mistakes for Eli's call. Three times he goes to Eli until finally, directed by Eli how to respond, he follows the directions meticulously, apparently quite awake by now. As the “boy” (v. 1) becomes a “prophet” (v. 20) also the traditional, archetypal prophetic dream (Num 12,6) turns into a direct encounter, to suit the author's idea of a prophet: one chosen by God to hear his word directly and deliver it truthfully (1 Sam 3,19-20; cp. Num 12,7-8).

(4) Job 4,12-21: Eliphaz reports an uncanny nocturnal revelation that brought a sapiential “word” with an *a fortiori* argumentation on the physical and moral frailty of humanity (vv. 17-21). The reference to תרדמה (RSV: “when deep sleep falls on men”, v. 13) may be intended to indicate the time rather than the condition of the recipient⁽³⁴⁾. In distinction from the oblique description in Elihu's speech (where the same phrase is used; 33,15) dream terminology is absent here. The phraseology and structure of Eliphaz' report can be traced to prophetic or quasi-prophetic accounts of theophany as Gen 15,12, Exod 33,19; 34,6 and 1 Kgs 19,11-12. Yet unlike Abraham, Moses, and Elijah in these stories, he remains vague about the divine entity, and the “word” comes to him “stealthily” (v. 12). Apart from showing the author's art in ‘double entendre’⁽³⁵⁾, such qualities suggest that Job 4,12-21 is an adaptation of the prophetic liminal report to a sapiential milieu.

(5) Ps 17: A “prayer” (according to the superscription) for god's response and protection from cruel enemies (vv. 6-14) is encased between two motifs that are typical of liminal reports: “night” (v. 3), when God is invited to examine the psalmist's innermost being, and awakening (v. 15), here associated with his hope of seeing God's “face” and “form” (תמונה, the term that in Num 12,8 characterizes God's direct appearance to Moses which is

⁽³⁴⁾ Byron in *Hebrew Melodies* rendered this phrase: “Deep sleep came down on ev'ry eye save mine”. See D. CLINES, “Job 4₁₃: A Byronic Suggestion”, *ZAW* 92 (1980) 289-291.

⁽³⁵⁾ The technique was first described by K. FULLERTON, “Double Entendre in the First Speech of Eliphaz”, *JBL* 49 (1930) 320-374, but not related to this particular verse. See also R.J.Z. WERBLOWSKY, “Stealing the Word”, *VT* 6 (1956) 105-106.

contrasted with the prophetic dream). As in psalm 3 it is debatable whether this ultimate vindication of the psalmist is visualized here as an “intimate spiritual experience”⁽³⁶⁾ or as a morning theophany⁽³⁷⁾, but clearly the nocturnal setting does not necessarily lead to a dream. Possibly it reflects an incubatory procedure that culminates in a real theophany⁽³⁸⁾.

This brief and incomplete review of liminal reports in the Bible has touched upon several possible explanations for the co-occurrence of dream or sleep features with wakeful features in these reports: (1) A literary-historical explanation: Liminal reports were in fact dream reports that had their dream terminology subdued. This seems suitable in the case of 1 Chr 1,7; but in prophetic and quasi-prophetic accounts such as 1 Sam 3, 1 Kgs 19,9-18 or Gen 15 it would be more appropriate to consider one of or a combination of the following: (2) A phenomenological explanation: a liminal report may reflect a liminal experience, e.g. in a state of consciousness that cannot be categorized by the usual dichotomy asleep/awake⁽³⁹⁾ or a mixed experience, that crosses the threshold of sleep during its evolvment, as may be the case in 1 Sam 3 or Ps 17 in view of the comments above. (3) A Tradition-historical approach: The common belief in the potential of dreams to reveal ‘another’ reality and thus bridge over gaps in time, space or being (i.e. between divine and human) was part of the heritage also of prophets and psalmists. This notion — evident in Num 12,6 — may explain why the patterns of prophetic reports of visions resemble those of parallel types of dream reports⁽⁴⁰⁾, or why certain accounts of prophetic experiences — e.g. 1 Sam 3 or Jer 31,23-26 — come so

⁽³⁶⁾ E.A. LESLIE, *The Psalms* (New York 1949) 353.

⁽³⁷⁾ WEISER, *The Psalms*, 180. Weiser is sympathetic to H. Schmidt’s hypothesis that finds here a temple ordeal. See above, note 15.

⁽³⁸⁾ LINDBLOM, “Theophanies in Holy Places”, 104-105.

⁽³⁹⁾ G. HÖLSCHER, *Die Propheten* (Leipzig 1914) 57-58; J.-M. HUSSER, *Le songe et la parole*, 151-157; ID., *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 153-154, 176-178. Hölscher attributed such experiences as 1 Sam 3 to a transition stage, whereas Husser discusses them in terms of conditioned prophetic sleep and lucid dreams. For various reports of ‘presence’ experiences that occurred at night but were not dreams see W. JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature* (London 1960) 74-91.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ M. SISTER, “Die Typen der prophetischen Visionen in der Bibel”, *MGWJ* 78 (1934) 399-430; Z. WEISMAN, “Patterns and Structures in the Visions of Amos”, *Beit Mikra* 14 (1969) 40-57 [Hebrew]; B. LONG, “Prophetic Call Traditions and Reports of Visions”, *ZAW* 84 (1972) 494-500; ID., ‘Reports of Visions among the Prophets’, *JBL* 95 (1976) 353-365.

close to dream reports. However, the conceptualization of divine-human communication among prophets must have been affected also by the feeling, typical amongst members of these circles, of special closeness to the divine. To one who "stood in the council of YHWH to perceive and to hear his word" (Jer 23,18), who spoke with him "mouth to mouth" and beheld his form (Num 12,8) the notion of dreams bridging the gap between heaven and earth could seem superfluous at best. The tendency to avoid dream terminology in reports of prophetic experiences is observable as early as the reports concerning Balaam (Num 22,9.20) and his counterpart in the early 8th century BCE inscription from Deir 'Alla⁽⁴¹⁾. Rather than the result of later deletions by scrupulous scribes this tendency should be seen as a true reflection of a prophetic perspective on encounters with the divine.

Which of these explanations, if any, could best fit the liminal quality of the experience reflected in Psalm 3?

The literary-historical line (1) would mean that in Ps 3,5-6 there was basically a reference to a dream, but unequivocal dream terms were excluded (or were used but subsequently removed) perhaps following the rise of more critical attitudes towards dreams and their revelatory significance. Such possibilities seem to gain support from "Psalm 155", an apocryphal psalm extant in Syriac (Psalm III) and in the Qumran Psalm scroll (11QPs^a xxiv 3-17), because this psalm indeed features a dream term (חלמתי i.e. I dreamt) in a passage (Ps 155,18-19 = 11QPs^a xxiv 16-17) that closely resembles Ps 3,5-6⁽⁴²⁾:

I cried "O Lord" and he answered me,	קראתי יהוה ויעני
[And he healed] my broken heart.	וירפא את שברי לבי
I slumbered [and s]lept,	נמתי ואישנה
I dreamt; indeed [I awoke]	חלמתי גם [הקיצותי]
[Thou didst support me, O Lord,	סמכתני יהוה
And I invoked] the Lord, [my deliverer]	ואקרא יהוה [מפלשי]

⁽⁴¹⁾ The late 7th century BCE dating for the core of the Balaam story in Num 22–24* proposed by Husser (*Le songe et la parole*, 180) following Mowinckel, Rost and Rouillard raises too many difficulties.

⁽⁴²⁾ The text and translation follow J.A. SANDERS, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, NY 1967) 110-111. For the Syriac version and its reconstructed Hebrew Vorlage see M. NOTH, "Die fünf syrisch überlieferten apokryphen Psalmen", ZAW 48 (1930) 1-23, esp. 6-7, 12-16. See also H.F. VAN ROOY, "Psalm 155: One, Two or Three Texts?" *RevQ* 16 (1993) 109-122 with further bibliography.

Psalm 155 (Syriac Psalm III) was described as “quite biblical in form and expression, being an individual *Danklied-Klageliied* combination”⁽⁴³⁾ and “as biblical as a nonbiblical psalm can get”⁽⁴⁴⁾. Understandably then, this parallel is cited as the ultimate proof that Ps 3,6 refers likewise to a dream⁽⁴⁵⁾. But such a conclusion does not necessarily follow from the evidence. Post-biblical authors, lacking the special sensitivity of their biblical predecessors regarding dreams, were inclined to introduce dream terms into their accounts of theophanies and prophetic messages that do not have such definitions in the Bible⁽⁴⁶⁾. Therefore it is equally feasible to argue that Psalm 155,18-19 in Syriac and in Qumran bears no greater testimony to the original meaning of Ps 3,6 than does Pap. Ryl. 461 to the original position of this verse. Both have their contribution to the history of exegesis, but this should not be confused with exegesis itself.

A combination of the phenomenological line (2) with the tradition-historical one (3) therefore seems more promising. Psalmists, not unlike biblical prophets, generally steer clear of dream terminology when reporting their own encounters with the divine. A sense of special closeness to God echoes also through the Psalms, although its roots are somewhat different: as regards prophets this sense has to do with their personal charismatic status, whereas psalmists often express their proximity to God in terms that are more spatial or cultic. “He who dwells in the shelter of Elyon, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps 91,1), who is “planted in the house of YHWH” (92,14) or hides in the shadow of his wings (17,8) may also be inclined to a more direct concept of communication with God than attainable

⁽⁴³⁾ J.A. SANDERS, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11* (11QPs^a) (DJD 4; Oxford 1965) 76.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ SANDERS, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 112. Sanders found it impossible to date this psalm. See however A. HURVITZ, “Observations on the Language of the Third Apocryphal Psalm from Qumran”, *RevQ* 5 (1964) 225-232. Hurvitz pointed to an accumulation of “linguistic idioms which are peculiar to late biblical or even post-biblical Hebrew”, concluding that the psalm could not be earlier than the Persian era (*ibid.*, 231). Cp. also VAN ROOY, “Psalm 155”, 110-111.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ SCHROEDER, “Psalm 3”, 247-248.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ J. BARTON, *Oracles of God. Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel After the Exile* (New York – Oxford 1986) 118-122, 127; R.K. GNUSE, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus. A Tradition-Historical Analysis* (Leiden 1996) 12, 161-162, 173-174, 176-177. Gnuse’s review shows that Josephus introduced dream terms when he paraphrased Gen 46,5; 2 Sam 12,1; 1 Kgs 9,2.

through dreams. How do these general observations affect our understanding of the experience reflected in Ps 3,5-6?

It could still be argued that a reference to sleeping, waking, and divine support in the midst of a crisis (Ps 3,6) subsequent to a report of a successful invocation of YHWH (v. 5) is compatible with a sought theophany or with incubation. It seems however, that the theophany ensuing from such procedures was not necessarily expected to occur in a dream. The possibility that an incubation leading to a real theophany was reflected in a psalm has already been raised in the case of Ps 17⁽⁴⁷⁾. In its general course this shift from the suggestion of dream theophany or incubation towards a real encounter is similar to the one recognizable in some prophetic liminal reports: What appears like an incipient incubation scene culminates with a divine message addressed to a wakeful recipient (1 Sam 3,11-14; 1 Kgs 19,15-18). Although originally it was not offered for psalm 3⁽⁴⁸⁾, such a theory could help explain not only the absence of explicit dream terms in this psalm (an absence that it shares with other liminal reports), but also — as shown below — the connection between יִסְמְכֵנִי (“YHWH supports me”) and the emphatically positioned reference to the psalmist's waking in v. 6b (III and IV in the statement of the problem, above).

As often in the Psalms and unlike the above-mentioned prophetic narratives, Psalm 3 does not cite a divine message, but the statement of YHWH's support (יִסְמְכֵנִי) is hardly less expressive. The link between this element and the psalmist's waking is expressed by כִּי in v. 6b. Although this particle sometimes serves as an emphatic introduction to an expression of confidence (Ps 38,16) or of God's protective intervention (Ps 22,10; 31,4), its most natural sense here would be causal, as indeed recognized by many interpreters⁽⁴⁹⁾. Often these interpreters represent the 'spiritual' approach, taking יִסְמְכֵנִי to express

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See above, note 38.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Lindblom (“Theophanies in Holy Places”, 104-105) concluded that in Psalm 3 it would be natural “to think of an incubation-oracle imparted in an incubation-dream”: The psalmist received a propitious answer during his sleep in the courtyard of the temple, and recited the psalm in the following morning.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See note 19. For a discussion of כִּי as an emphatic introductory particle in the passages mentioned above see A. BARUCQ, *L'Expression de la louange divine et de la prière dans la Bible et en Égypte* (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, bibliothèque d'étude 32) (Cairo 1962) 338-339. I am grateful to my colleague Prof. Nili Shupak for this reference.

the general idea of divine support and protection⁽⁵⁰⁾ of the psalmist without which he could not have survived the night or spent it peacefully. The verb סמך signifying “support, sustain, help” is indeed well attested in biblical Hebrew — Qal-transitive uses comparable to Ps 3,6 occur in Isa 59,16; 63,5 (in both סמך is paralleled by יָשַׁע Hiphil, deliver) ; Ezek 30,6; Ps 54,6 (paralleled by עֲזַר help); 37,17; 119,116 — as well as in other Semitic languages⁽⁵¹⁾. But סמך is also capable of denoting more concrete support, even with God as subject: Thus God is said to steady a person’s hand to prevent his fall (Ps 37,24) and to support someone who falls (Ps 145,14)⁽⁵²⁾. It can be argued that the gesture intended here is not visible and that it can also be taken more generally or even figuratively. Indeed, the possibility of interpreting it “in either the concrete or the figurative sense”⁽⁵³⁾ is what makes Psalms’ phraseology so evasive and intriguing. Yet in Psalm 3 there is the additional factor of the possibly causal link between the action denoted by סמך and the waking of the psalmist. This sways the balance somewhat towards a tangible gesture, as indeed found in some experiences of “presence”⁽⁵⁴⁾.

3. *Close Encounters and Hand Gestures in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*

A comparison of Psalm 3 with several theophany reports in ancient Near Eastern sources seems to support some of the observations made above. It reveals that (a) A number of the theophanies whose relation to dreams can be categorized as liminal⁽⁵⁵⁾ are experienced by

⁽⁵⁰⁾ If יִסְמְכֵנִי refers to the divine protection of the psalmist, this links v. 6b back to v. 4a with the epithet מֶגֶן בַּעֲדַי “my shield”. Such a link finds a different expression in LXX, which translates both expressions as “support” and “supporter” respectively, using cognate forms (ἀντιλήμυται and ἀντιλήπτωρ) that make rare or unique equivalents of these Hebrew lexemes. See PIETERSMA, “When David Fleed Abessalom”, 652-655.

⁽⁵¹⁾ D.P. WRIGHT – J. MILGROM, “סָמַךְ, *sāmak*; שָׁמַיְכָה, *ś’mikā*”, *TDOT* X, 278-279; J. HOFSTIJZER – K. JONGELING, *Dictionary of the North-Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden 1995) II, 792 (smk.); W. BAUMGARTNER et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. M.E.J. RICHARDSON) (Leiden 1995) II, 759.

⁽⁵²⁾ As noted by Wright and Milgrom with their remarks on the semantic range of סָמַךְ, “from physical supporting or leaning to the abstract notion of helping and sustaining”; WRIGHT – MILGROM, “סָמַךְ, *sāmak*; שָׁמַיְכָה, *ś’mikā*”, 279-280.

⁽⁵³⁾ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 86-87.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ For the term and biblical examples see section 2 above.

individuals in special proximity (spatial or personal) to the theophanic deity; (b) Some of these liminal reports refer to hand gestures made by a deity to the recipient of the theophany. In the following paragraphs the texts in each of these two categories are arranged according to phenomenological considerations.

a) Close encounters

Dan'el (1) and Ashurbanipal (2), both found in spatial proximity to the deity, are reported to experience theophanies that may border on dreams but are not so entitled. The cylinders of Gudea (3) and the Mari letters (4) invite observations also on a personal status of proximity to the deity that coincides with a decrease in or with non-occurrence of dream terminology.

(1) Dan'el: In the Ugaritic epics two men are privileged with the personal blessings and/or guidance of El ('il) concerning a yet unfulfilled desire to beget a son and heir: Kirta and Dan'el. The former weeps "in his chamber"⁽⁵⁶⁾, his tears pouring "like shekels" to the ground, thus provoking El's descent "in his dream", with the question "What ails Kirta that he cries" etc. El's encounter with Dan'el⁽⁵⁷⁾, on the other hand, although it resembles the one with Kirta in its subject and its result (the birth of a son), is never entitled 'dream'. This may seem odd given the complex ritual performed by Dan'el, which entails spending six days and nights (!) supplying "the holy ones" with food and drink, before his prayers are answered. The difference in terminology between the two theophanies can perhaps be related to the difference in location: Kirta's dream brings El to his chamber, but when Dan'el performs his complex "incubatory" ritual⁽⁵⁸⁾ he apparently is already in spatial proximity to the gods, so the ritual results in a more direct encounter.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ *KTU*, 1.14 I:26: "y'rb bḥdrh ybky" = "He entered his chamber (and) wept". Cp. also *ANET*, 143 (translation by H.L. Ginsberg).

⁽⁵⁷⁾ *KTU*, 1.17 I:16-26

⁽⁵⁸⁾ J. OBERMANN, *How Daniel Was Blessed with a Son: An Incubation Scene in Ugaritic* (JAOS Suppl., 6; Baltimore 1946) 10. This widely followed definition of Dan'el's actions has been challenged by B. MARGALIT, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT* (BZAW 182; Berlin – New York 1989) 260-266 and HUSSER, *Le songe et la parole*, 44-54 who both point to some inaccuracies in the adoption of the Greek term into the Semitic world. However, their argument that Dan'el is not engaged in incubation since he is not sleeping (hence not dreaming) on the seventh day, I find less relevant. As the present discussion shows, incubated — or sought — theophany does not necessarily entail dreaming, since a more direct encounter may evolve.

(2) Ashurbanipal: Concerned about the Elamites marching against his land, the Assyrian king comes to the temple of Ishtar and crouches before the image of the goddess in tearful prayer⁽⁵⁹⁾. Subsequently, he reports, Ishtar heard his distressful sighs and told him “do not fear”. She had seen his hands raised in prayer and his eyes filled with tears and had mercy upon him. This is another example of a theophany invoked in a time of crisis⁽⁶⁰⁾ and not entitled dream. Nevertheless some relation to the dream emerges in the immediate sequel that describes an experience from “that same night” involving a priest of Ishtar (“^{LU}šabrû”)⁽⁶¹⁾. The šabrû-priest went to bed and had a dream. He awoke and repeated to the king the nocturnal vision (“tabrît mûši”) which Ishtar caused him to see⁽⁶²⁾. In it the goddess enters, her weapons ready for battle, and speaks with Ashurbanipal like a mother, assuring him of her steadfast support. The scene ends with Ishtar wrapping the king in her baby sling, protecting his whole body. The priest’s night vision is probably recounted to corroborate the preceding report of the king’s encounter with the goddess, to which he was the sole human witness, perhaps focusing on elements that the king presumably could not see while crouching before Ishtar’s image⁽⁶³⁾. Recently it was suggested that the priest had his dream or night vision “at home”⁽⁶⁴⁾. If this is correct then the relation between the experience reported by the priest and that of Ashurbanipal himself is comparable to the relation between El’s appearance in Kirta’s dream and his encounter with Dan’el: Those who visit a sacred precinct (Ashurbanipal, Dan’el) experience a more direct encounter with the gods invoked, whereas other theophanies — related or similar in

⁽⁵⁹⁾ The whole episode: Cylinder B, V:16-76. M. STRECK, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s* (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7; Leipzig 1916) II, 112-119; cf. also 190-193 (K2652); English translation: D.D. LUCKENBILL, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago 1926-1927) II, §§ 858-861.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ OPPENHEIM, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 200.

⁽⁶¹⁾ Ibid., §§860-861; ANET, 451.

⁽⁶²⁾ Here I followed the translation offered by S.A.L. BUTLER, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals* (AOAT 258; Münster 1998) 31-32. According to other translations the night vision seems to be a separate experience that followed the waking of the šabrû-priest. See LUCKENBILL, *Ancient Records II*, §861; OPPENHEIM, *The Interpretation of Dream*, 249 #10.

⁽⁶³⁾ Oppenheim (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 201) argued convincingly that the two reports — the priest’s and Ashurbanipal’s — referred to one and the same experience.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ HUSSER, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 40.

subject but whose recipients are remote — are mediated through dreams.

(3) The cylinders of Gudea, 21st century BCE Ruler of Lagash, present a graded continuum from dream to incubated vision that can be linked to the growing proximity — both personal and spatial — between Gudea and his god, Ningirsu⁽⁶⁵⁾. The first encounter in which Ningirsu commands Gudea to build his temple, Enninu, occurs in a symbolic theophanic dream that requires interpretation (A i:17 – vi:14) and it is repeatedly referred to as “dream” (ma-mú)⁽⁶⁶⁾. The location of the dream is not stated. The second dream is incubated in the temple site (A ix:5 – xii:11), has Ningirsu step up to the head of the sleeping Gudea, “briefly touching him”⁽⁶⁷⁾, and consists of a long speech in which this god grants the temple builder further information and blessings. This encounter is named “a dream” (ma-mú) only in retrospect, when Gudea awakes (A xii:12-13). On a third occasion Gudea is shown the complete temple reaching heaven (A xx:5-12). This vision is also incubated in the temple site, occurring while Gudea sleeps there, and it is not called “a dream”.

(4) A status of personal closeness to the divine distinguishing between dreamers and other visionaries emerges from the Mari letters. It has been observed that Mari dreamers “bear no particular title of diviner. They are referred to merely as ‘youth’ [...] and ‘(free)man’ [...]”, whereas most cases of Mari prophecy “employ a specific title of diviner-prophet”⁽⁶⁸⁾.

b) Hand gestures

Hand gestures by deities are reported of several theophany recipients. Only in the case of Adda-guppi, elderly mother of the Neo-

⁽⁶⁵⁾ See V. HUROWITZ, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*. Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings (JSOTSS 115; Sheffield 1992) 49-54. Hurowitz shows how the dreams contribute to reading Gudea's plot as a voyage towards the removal of uncertainty. For the full text (translation with transliteration) see E.J. WILSON, *The Cylinders of Gudea* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1996) 9-196; D.O. EDZARD, *Gudea and His Dynasty* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, 3/1; Toronto 1997) 68-101.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ As also noted by R.E. AVERBECK in his translation, *The Context of Scripture* (eds. W. HALLO – K.L. YOUNGER, Jr.) (Leiden 2000) II, 419, n. 7.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ A ix:6 as translated by EDZARD, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, 74.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ A. MALAMAT, *Mari and the Bible* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 12; Leiden 1998) 97. Malamat takes this distribution to reflect “a phenomenological delineation between the professional oracle, privileged with direct revelation, and the dreamer of dreams”.

Babylonian king Nabonidus (1), this occurs in a dream. The other examples, as arranged below, reveal a growing distance from dreams.

(1) Adda-guppi (mother of Nabonidus): In her “Autobiography”⁽⁶⁹⁾ the queen-mother, a great devotee of the moon god Sin and his coterie (Ningal, Nusku and Sadarnunna), recounts her devotional acts and her petition that the moon god return to his temple in Harran, apparently after it fell into the hands of the Babylonians and the Medes (610 BCE). The response came to her “in a dream”: “Sin, the king of all the gods put his hands on me saying ‘the gods will return on account of you! I will entrust your son Nabonidus with the divine residence of Harran; he will (re)build the temple Ehulhul and complete this task [...]’”⁽⁷⁰⁾.

(2) Gudea, (3) Ashurbanipal, and possibly (4) Dan’el: The reports of divine encounters featuring these figures were cited above, under a. In the first two cases divine physical gestures towards the addressees were noted: Ningirsu “briefly touching” Gudea in his incubated temple vision and Ishtar clasping and protecting Ashurbanipal in the night vision of the šabrû-priest. The case of Dan’el is less certain since the text earlier restored “[by the hand] Il takes his servant”⁽⁷¹⁾ was later reread “El took [a cup] <in his hand>”⁽⁷²⁾.

The divine hand gestures towards the following theophany recipients seem even more remote from dreams proper:

(5) Hattushili III (13th century BCE) relates in §4 (I:35-44) of his so-called “Apology”⁽⁷³⁾ that when summoned “to the wheel” (ominous

⁽⁶⁹⁾ For the text (Nab H1B) see C.J. GADD, “The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus”, *AnSt* 8 (1958) 35-92, esp. 48-49. On its characterization as “fictional autobiography” cf. T. LONGMAN, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography*. A generic and comparative study (Winona Lake, IN 1991) 97-103.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Ibid. II 5-11. The quotation follows the translation in *ANESTP*, 561.

⁽⁷¹⁾ (KTU) 1.17 I:35 thus rendered by H.L. Ginsberg in *ANET*, 150. Cp. C. VIROLLEAUD, *La légende phénicienne de Danel* (Mission de Ras Shamra 1; Paris 1936) 187 (= IID 1:35).

⁽⁷²⁾ MARGALIT, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT*, 118. For the complete emendation proposal see D. PARDEE, “An Emendation in the Ugaritic AQHT Text”, *JNES* 36 (1977) 53-56. Pardee refers to earlier proposals to replace “hand” by “cup” in publications by J.J. Jackson and H.P. Dressler as well as by S.E. Loewenstamm. Though widely followed the emendation can perhaps be subject to some reconsideration, but this cannot be undertaken here.

⁽⁷³⁾ KUB I 1 + duplicates; H. OTTEN, *Die Apologie Hattusilis III*. Das Bild der Überlieferung (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 24; Wiesbaden 1981) 6-7. The following quotations are from Th.P.J. van den Hout’s translation based on Otten’s edition in *The Context of Scripture* (eds. W. HALLO - K. L. YOUNGER, Jr.) (Leiden 1997) I, 200. Cf. also A. MOUTON, “L’importance des rêves dans l’existence de

judicial procedure) by his brother Muwatalli, Ishtar appeared to him in a dream saying: "To the deity (of the process) I will leave you so do not fear!". The text continues to report Hattushili's subsequent acquittal, concluding that "Since the goddess, My Lady, held me by the hand she never exposed me to an evil deity or to an evil lawsuit, never did she let an enemy weapon sway over me [...] Whenever illness befell me [...] My Lady held me by the hand in every respect". Connected only indirectly to Ishtar's dream appearance to the king, the goddess' hand gesture assumes here a motto significance of general support in many types of crisis, illustrated further both textually and pictographically on reliefs and seal impressions. Remarkably Hattushili III himself is depicted as the recipient of such a gesture only on the silver tablet containing the peace treaty with Ramesses II, another king who had ample use for this gesture in his royal undertaking⁽⁷⁴⁾.

(6) Ramesses II: In the literary record of the battle of Qadesh the Egyptian king relates how the god Amun responded to his call: "The moment I called to him I found Amun came, he gave me his hand and I was happy. As (close as) face to face, he spoke out (from) behind me: Forward! I am with you, I am your father, my hand is with you! I am more useful to you than hundred-thousands of men, I am the Lord of Victory who loves bravery"⁽⁷⁵⁾. The passage and its context echo Psalm 3 in several typical motifs of the petition prayer and the response, such as complaint about numerous enemies, invocation of one's god and reliance on his support. Remarkably it renders the appearance of Amun with a phrase used also of a dream theophany ("Amun came")⁽⁷⁶⁾ but the context clearly excludes such an understanding.

To summarize, divine gestures of support are not uncommon in

Hattušili III" (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Mouton for an advance copy of her article. In earlier renditions the words of the deity in the king's dream were taken as a negative question e.g. "Would I leave you to (some other) deity?". See *The Context of Scripture*, I, 200, n. 11.

⁽⁷⁴⁾As observed by Th.P.J. van den Hout (*The Context of Scripture*, I, 199 n. 5) apropos the first occurrence of the phrase in the Apology of Hattushili (§3).

⁽⁷⁵⁾Quoted from K.A. Kitchen's translation in *The Context of Scripture*, II, 35. Cf. also P.D. MILLER, *They Cried to the Lord*. The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer (Minneapolis 1994) 149.

⁽⁷⁶⁾Thus it is reported of Amenhotep II on the Memphis Stella that Amun came before him in his dream "to give [him] valor". See OPPENHEIM, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 190-191; S. SAUNERON, "Les songes et leur interprétation dans l'Égypte ancienne", *Les songes et leur interprétation*, 22; *ANET*, 246.

reports of theophanies also in other ancient Near Eastern religions. Remarkably, in most of these reports — as in Psalm 3 — some relation to dreaming can be detected, yet the experience is not identified as such.

Reread in the light of these comments, does Psalm 3 finally yield the latent scenario of its dramatic turning point? It is impossible to be sure, given the typical absence in the Psalms “of precise details concerning the liturgical act[s] with which we presume they were associated”⁽⁷⁷⁾.

With all due caution I would venture the conclusion that the text seems compatible with an occurrence during a night spent at the temple with the hope of gaining divine help in a crisis (v. 6a). Having repeatedly called to YHWH the psalmist finally has his response (v.5): It comes as an experience of presence, with a tangible, symbolic gesture of divine support (v. 6b). To describe this gesture the psalmist resorts to the imperfect (יִדְוֶה יִסְמַכֵּנִי), since his sensation of it not only wakes him but also lingers with him till he can face his enemies without fear (v. 7), thus inspiring his renewed prayer (v. 8a) with new confidence (v. 8b).

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SUMMARY

Vv. 5-6 mark a turning point in Psalm 3, both structurally and thematically, probably reflecting a significant personal experience. Due to the mention of sleeping and waking (v. 6a) this experience is sometimes interpreted as a dream in which the psalmist got word of his imminent deliverance. Recently supported by a Qumran parallel that mentions dreaming explicitly (11QPs^a xxiv 16-17; B. Schroeder, *Biblica* 81 [2000] 243-251), this argument nevertheless seems questionable, given e.g. the tendency of later Judaism to attribute dreams also to biblical figures that are not characterized in such terms in the Bible. The main thrust of this article is to examine the psalm in comparison with theophanic reports elsewhere in the Bible and in ANE literature. This analysis shows the language of Psalm 3 to be compatible with an incubatory ritual that culminates in a real experience of presence with a divine gesture of support. These findings are related to the proximity to God that finds expression in the psalms.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ HUSSER, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 175 (Husser refers here to the problem of “using psalms to reconstitute an incubation practice”).

A Hippodrome on the Road to Ephrath

Few professions are as exacting in their insistence on the suppression of one's identity as is translation, yet it is inevitable that translators betray in the fabric of their work something of the context in which they write. No target language exists outside of time and space, and even the most faithful translator will deliberately or inadvertently introduce an occasional anachronism to render a remote text more accessible to a contemporary audience. This phenomenon is familiar from ancient Bible versions, where it often manifests itself in the identification of obscure place-names and the clarification of geographical allusions. At such points the historian and historical geographer may step in and ask if anything useful is to be learned from the translation. In what follows I examine several such cases — all of them, I shall argue, ultimately connected — considering first their exegetical foundations and then their historical implications.

1. *LXX to Gen 48,7*

Before blessing the son's of Joseph, Jacob recalls his return to the land of Canaan and the death of his wife Rachel: "As for me, upon my return from Paddan, I was bereaved of Rachel in the land of Canaan en route, some distance⁽¹⁾ remaining till Ephrath, and I buried her there on the road to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Gen 48,7). *LXX*, however, introduces a surprising entity into the translation: "When I came from Mesopotamia of Syria, your mother Rachel died in the land of Canaan as I approached the hippodrome of Chabratha⁽²⁾ of the land going to Ephratha, and I buried her on the road of the hippodrome,

(1) "Some distance" renders the problematic Hebrew כְּבֵרֶת אֶרֶץ. For various ancient and modern attempts to grapple with the meaning of the phrase (found elsewhere only in Gen 35,16 and 2 Kgs 5,19) see N.H. TUR-SINAI, "In the Wake of *Halashon Vehasefer*", *Leš* 20 (1957) 1-3 (Hebrew); E. VOGT, "Benjamin geboren 'eine Meile' von Ephrata", *Bib* 56 (1975) 30-36; Y. MAORI, *The Peshitta Version of the Pentateuch and Early Jewish Exegesis* (Jerusalem 1995) 81, n. 43 (Hebrew); C.T.R. HAYWARD, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford 1995) 214-215.

(2) Cf. כְּבֵרֶת (instead of MT's כְּבֵרֶת) in 4Qgen^f. See J.R. Davila's edition in E. ULRICH et al., *Qumran Cave 4. VII. Genesis to Numbers* (DJD 12; Oxford 1994) 54.

which is Bethlehem". What is the source of this oddity, a hippodrome on the road to Ephrath?

Juxtaposing MT and LXX, we note the difficulty of establishing a one-to-one correspondence of sense units when we come to the curious hippodrome. To facilitate the comparison let us break up the verse as follows⁽³⁾:

- (a) MT: ואני בבאי מפרן מתה עלי רחל בארץ כנען
 LXX: ἐγὼ δὲ ἦνίκα ἤρχομην ἐκ Μεσοποταμίας τῆς Συρίας
 ἀπέθανεν Ῥαχὴλ ἡ μήτηρ σου ἐν γῆς Χανάαν
- (b) MT: בדרך בעוד כבדת ארץ לבא אפרתה
 LXX: ἐγγίζοντός μου κατὰ τὸν ἵπποδρομον χαβραθα τῆς γῆς τοῦ
 ἐλθεῖν Ἐφράθα
- (c) MT: ואקברה שם בדרך אפרתה הוא בית לחם
 LXX: καὶ κατώρυξα αὐτήν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ ἵπποδρόμου αὕτη ἐστὶν
 Βηθλέεμ

While "hippodrome" in (c) seems to come in place of "Ephrath", no such correspondence is found in (b). The situation is complicated by the fact that MT of Gen 35,16.19 is reminiscent of the Hebrew in (b) and (c), but LXX there lacks any reference to a hippodrome⁽⁴⁾. Jerome was aware of the problem but had to concede that he had no idea what possessed the translators of LXX to render the verse as they did⁽⁵⁾. Modern interpreters have not fared much better. Some take the hippodrome of LXX in (b) to be a translation of Hebrew כבדת (in which case it is seen as a doublet of the transliteration χαβραθα), others regard it as coming in place of בדרך⁽⁶⁾. In either case, special

⁽³⁾ I deliberately deviate from the Masoretic division at the end of (a).

⁽⁴⁾ Manuscript variants mentioning the hippodrome are patently secondary. See J.W. WEVERS, *Genesis* (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum 1; Göttingen 1974) 335-336. The Jewish historian Demetrius (quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 9.21.10) apparently had the LXX of Gen 35,16 before him when he wrote, in the latter part of the third century BCE, of the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel. He makes no mention of a hippodrome. See E. BICKERMAN, "Some Notes on the Transmission of the Septuagint", *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (AGJU 9; Leiden 1976) I, 142; C.R. HOLLADAY, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors* (SBLTT 20. Pseudepigrapha Series 10; Chico, CA 1983) I, 68-69.

⁽⁵⁾ *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* to Gen 35,16-19, in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera. Pars I. Opera exegetica* (CChrSL 72; Turnhout 1959) 43.

⁽⁶⁾ See for example Z. FRANKEL, *Ueber den Einfluss der palästinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik* (Leipzig 1831) 18; S. KRAUSS, *Talmudische Archäologie* (Leipzig 1911) II, 392; VOGT, "Benjamin", 30.

pleading is required to explain how the Hebrew source by itself could yield such an unlikely result.

If we abandon the assumption — doubtful, in the circumstances — of direct and self-contained translation from the Hebrew, it appears more likely that the translator is in fact alluding to a popular landmark in order to clarify for the reader the location of the Tomb of Rachel, and we must assume the presence of a proper hippodrome somewhere in the vicinity of the tomb, along the road approaching Bethlehem from the north⁽⁷⁾. Inevitably the next question will be: do we know anything else of such a structure? As we have already seen, by the time of Jerome, who knew the area of Bethlehem better than most, the hippodrome was already a mystery and seems to have left no visible traces. Nor do any of his predecessors among Christian authors display firsthand knowledge of such a site, for none — including Eusebius — tells us anything beyond what was found before them in LXX⁽⁸⁾. Similar reservations hold true for the description in *Testament of Joseph* 20,3 of the burial of Bilhah and Zilpah by the hippodrome (παρὰ τὸν ἵππόδρομον), near Rachel's tomb⁽⁹⁾. Though the provenance of that text is notoriously obscure, by all accounts it postdates LXX and is probably influenced by it. Only if *Testament of Joseph* were not dependent here on LXX could we use it to draw conclusions about an existing structure familiar to the author.

Harl has suggested that the reference to the hippodrome in LXX of Gen 48,7 is an interpolation from the time of Herod or later. Her argument is not textual, that is to say it is not based on syntactic analysis revealing the work of a later hand or on indications of such

⁽⁷⁾ Thus M. HARL, *La Bible d'Alexandrie*. La Genèse (Paris 1986) 303.

⁽⁸⁾ See for example Eusebius, *Das Onomastikon der biblischen Ortsnamen* (GCS 11, I; Leipzig 1904) 82 (and cf. Jerome's translation on p. 83). Against assigning independent value to such passages see V. GUÉRIN, *Description géographique, historique et archéologique de la Palestine*. Première partie. Judée (Paris 1868) I, 225-229.

⁽⁹⁾ For the text see *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (ed. M. DE JONGE) (PVTG 1,2; Leiden 1978) 166. In general on the problem of dating see E. SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (new English version revised and edited by G. VERMES – F. MILLAR – M. GOODMAN) (Edinburgh 1987) III.2, 767-781; M. DE JONGE, "Defining the Major Issues in the Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs", *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature*. The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 18; Leiden – Boston 2003) 71-83.

activity in the manuscripts⁽¹⁰⁾. Rather, it is based on the general consideration that neither our literary sources nor the material evidence of archeology attest to the existence of any hippodromes in Judea before the time of Herod. A brief survey of the earliest evidence will suffice⁽¹¹⁾, but a preliminary terminological remark is in order. Scholars have long suspected Josephus of using the terms “amphitheater” and “hippodrome” interchangeably, generating more than a little confusion in the process. That suspicion has been dramatically confirmed by the recent discovery of the Herodian hippodrome of Caesarea — the same one which Josephus calls an amphitheater⁽¹²⁾. Describing the outbreak of violence precipitated by Herod’s death, Josephus also mentions a hippodrome apparently adjacent to Jerusalem from the south. Despite the best efforts of archeologists, the remains of that facility continue to evade detection⁽¹³⁾. Finally, Josephus speaks alternately of a hippodrome and an amphitheater in Jericho at the time of Herod’s death;

⁽¹⁰⁾ HARL, *La Bible*, 303. For the manuscript evidence see WEVERS, *Genesis*, 452. FRANKEL, *Ueber den Einfluss*, 18, argues that the hippodrome of section (b) of the verse is a doublet and should be taken as a gloss (he proposes no date), but even he makes no such claim for that of section (c). At any rate, a doublet (if there is one in [b], which is far from certain) is not necessarily evidence of late redactional or scribal activity but may reflect conflation of exegetical traditions at the earliest stages of composition. The methodological question has been discussed at length by Z. TALSHIR, “Double Translations in the Septuagint”, *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*. Jerusalem 1986 (ed. C.E. COX) (SBLSCS 23; Atlanta, GA 1987) 21-63; cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, “On Double Readings, Pseudo-Variants and Ghost-Names in the Historical Books”, *Emanuel*. Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of E. Tov (ed. S.M. PAUL – R.A. KRAFT – L.H. SCHIFFMAN – W.W. FIELDS) (VTS 94; Leiden – Boston 2003) 591-604.

⁽¹¹⁾ For further details see J.H. HUMPHREY, *Roman Circuses*. Arenas for Chariot Racing (London 1986) 528-533. Several of Humphrey’s conclusions must be revised in light of recent archeological discoveries. See Z. WEISS, “Buildings for Entertainment”, *The City in Roman Palestine* (ed. D. SPERBER) (New York – Oxford 1998) 85-91; and cf. in the same volume J.J. SCHWARTZ, “Archeology and the City”, 169-170.

⁽¹²⁾ *B.J.* 1.415; *Ant.* 15.341. On the excavations of Caesarea and Josephus’ nomenclature see Y. PORATH, “Why did Josephus Name the Chariot-Racing Facility at Caesarea ‘Amphitheater’?” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 23 (2004) 63-67.

⁽¹³⁾ *B.J.* 2.44; *Ant.* 17.255. This structure is identified by some with the amphitheater built by Herod “in the plain” (*Ant.* 15.268). See in general J. PATRICH, “On the Lost Circus of Aelia Capitolina”, *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21 (2002) 173-188.

these are presumably one and the same structure, now uncovered in excavations⁽¹⁴⁾.

Is this sufficient reason to assume a Herodian or post-Herodian interpolation of the hippodrome in LXX? It could be, were it not for two things: first, there is no known Herodian hippodrome in the area implied by LXX; second, Hellenistic, pre-Roman hippodromes were simple, non-monumental structures that would not necessarily leave traces for us to find. Accordingly, Humphrey has suggested giving credence to the LXX allusion as is, taking it as evidence for the existence of just such a Hellenistic arena⁽¹⁵⁾, and so, more recently has Patrich⁽¹⁶⁾. According to the plain meaning of the text, we would expect this race-course to have stood somewhere in the vicinity of Rachel's Tomb, along the road approaching Bethlehem from the north. I will argue below that even in the absence of any physical remains of the hippodrome of LXX, the material evidence of the region points away from the Herodian period to an earlier, definable era. It will be helpful, however, first to introduce another ancient Bible version into our discussion.

2. *Targum Onqelos to Gen 14,17*

Gen 14,17 tells us that upon his return from the successful campaign against Chedorlaomer and his allies, Abram was greeted by the king of Sodom in "the Valley of Shaveh, which is the King's Valley"⁽¹⁷⁾. By implication, it is there too that Abram is blessed in the

⁽¹⁴⁾ B.J. 1.659, 666; *Ant.* 17.175, 178, 193-194, 233. For a description of the finds see E. NETZER – R. LAUREYS-CHACHY, "The Hippodrome in Jericho. A Multi-Functional Complex", E. NETZER, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho*. Final Reports of the 1973-1987 Excavations (Jerusalem 2004) II, 195-225. Against the presence of a race-course at lower Herodium see E. NETZER, *The Palaces of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great* (Jerusalem 2001) 114-116.

⁽¹⁵⁾ HUMPHREY, *Roman Circuses*, 530; cf. p. 535 on makeshift Hellenistic hippodromes. Humphrey unfortunately confuses the Tomb of Rachel with that of the Patriarchs at Hebron.

⁽¹⁶⁾ PATRICH, "On the Lost Circus", 186, n. 51: "It is quite possible that during the Hellenistic period there existed in this flat area, on top of the Judaean ridge, far from Jerusalem and to the south, a simple Hellenistic-type race course, with no architectural structure".

⁽¹⁷⁾ MT: עֲמֹק שָׁוֵה הוּא עֲמֹק הַמֶּלֶךְ. For the meeting of Melchizedek and Abram according to the Targums see M. McNAMARA, "Melchizedek: Gen 14,17-20 in the Targums, in Rabbinic and Early Christian Literature", *Bib* 81 (2000) 1-31; cf. P. GRELOT, "De L'Apocryphe de la Genèse aux Targoums: sur Genèse 14, 18-20", *Intertestamental Essays in honour of J.T. Milik* (ed. Z.J. KAPER) (Kraków 1992) 77-90.

following verses by Melchizedek, king of Shalem, who welcomes him with bread and wine (Gen 14,18-20). Remarkably, *Tg. Onq.* renders the location of the encounter as “the empty plain, which is the stadium (בית ריסא) of the king”⁽¹⁸⁾. Let us examine further the nature of this place. In its semantic range, ריס/ריסא is equivalent to the Greek στάδιον, both as a unit of measurement⁽¹⁹⁾ and as a term describing a type of race-course. That it could mean the latter was known to Jerome, who in his etymological remarks on the Biblical place-name Rissa (ריסא) in Num 33,21-22 claims that that word appears in the original Hebrew of Jubilees in the sense of “stadium”, “in which boxers and athletes train and the speed of runners is proven”⁽²⁰⁾. Indeed, the same sense is in all likelihood reflected in *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Num 33,21, where Rissa is transformed into בית ריסא⁽²¹⁾. We can probably be more specific. Hippodromes too are occasionally referred to as stadia⁽²²⁾. That this is the case in *Tg. Onq.* to Gen 14,17 is suggested by the third and final instance of the use of בית ריסא in targumic literature: *Tg. Neb* to Jer 31,39(40), where in language reminiscent of *Tg. Onq.* (and probably influenced by it)⁽²³⁾ the Horses’ Gate (שער הסוסים) of MT is rendered as “the king’s stadium”⁽²⁴⁾. Seeking to define this municipal

⁽¹⁸⁾ למישר מפנא הוא בית ריסא דמלכא (see *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*. Vol. I: The Pentateuch According to Targum Onkelos [ed. A. SPERBER] [Leiden 1959] 20). The passage is similarly translated in the later *Tg. Ps.-J.*, clearly deriving from *Tg. Onq.*; see *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch*. Text and Concordance (ed. E.G. CLARKE) (Hoboken, NJ 1984) 15. On מפנא as “empty” or “levelled” see McNAMARA, “Melchizedek”, 4, n. 5.

⁽¹⁹⁾ KRAUSS, *Talmudische Archäologie* II, 391-392; S. LIEBERMAN, *Tosefta Ki-fshutah* (New York 1988) IX, 166-167.

⁽²⁰⁾ *Epistula* 78.20: in quo exercentur pugiles at athletae et cursorum uelocitas conprobatur (*Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*. Pars II: Epistulae LXXI-CXX [ed. I. HILBERG] [CSEL 55; Vienna – Leipzig 1912] 68). The thornier question is how Jerome came to the conclusion — probably mistaken — that ריסא in its context in Jubilees means a sports field instead of being a unit of measure. See the discussion in H.I. NEWMAN, *Jerome and the Jews*. Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem 1997) 95 (Hebrew).

⁽²¹⁾ *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (ed. E.G. CLARKE) 203. See R. LE DÉAUT, *Targum du Pentateuque* (SC 261; Paris 1979) III, 312, n. 21. ריס also refers to a stadium in the description of the study house of R. Eliezer in Canticles Rabba 1,3.

⁽²²⁾ H.A. HARRIS, *Greek Athletics and the Jews* (Cardiff 1976) 34-35; HUMPHREY, *Roman Circuses*, 537.

⁽²³⁾ I will argue below for the secondary nature of the hippodrome in *Tg. Neb*.

⁽²⁴⁾ *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts* (ed. A. SPERBER) (Leiden 1962) III, 209-210. The Horses’ Gate appears also in Neh 3,28 and 2 Chr 23,15.

structure devoted to horses, the targumist transforms the area of the city gate into a royal stadium. In context, a race-course for horses, i.e., a hippodrome, is clearly intended. Finally, if the Persian etymology proposed by various scholars for טרי is correct, then “hippodrome” would indeed be one of its primary meanings⁽²⁵⁾.

How does *Tg. Onq.* come to stage the reception of Abram in a royal hippodrome? As in the previous instance, we must first ask if the translation can be explained without appeal to the existence of a genuine race-course in a place otherwise associated by tradition or interpretation with Gen 14,17. Several scholars have taken this route, suggesting that to make sense of MT’s “Valley of the King” (which is also an “empty plain”), *Tg. Onq.* projects onto the verse a generally familiar contemporary reality of royal hippodromes⁽²⁶⁾. Not surprisingly, some go further and identify the particular hippodrome envisioned by *Tg. Onq.* with the Herodian hippodrome of Jerusalem, discussed above⁽²⁷⁾. After all, Melchizedek the king of Shalem is widely (though not exclusively) understood to be king of Jerusalem⁽²⁸⁾, so such a locale might be thought well-suited to the encounter between him and Abram⁽²⁹⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ See A. KOHUT, *Aruch Completum* (Vienna 1926) VII, 285 (Hebrew), and cf. B. Geiger’s note in *Additamenta ad Librum Aruch Completum* (ed. S. KRAUSS) (Vienna 1937) 384 (Hebrew); J.T. MILIK, “‘Saint-Thomas de Phordêsa’ et Gen. 14,17”, *Bib* 42 (1961) 82, n. 3.

⁽²⁶⁾ See M. ABERBACH – B. GROSSFELD, *Targum Onqelos to Genesis. A Critical Analysis Together With An English Translation of the Text* (New York 1982) 89; B. GROSSFELD, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 6; Edinburgh 1988) 69; McNAMARA, “Melchizedek”, 4-5; and cf. the following note.

⁽²⁷⁾ S. KLEIN, *The Land of Judah* (Tel Aviv 1939), 87 (Hebrew); MILIK, “‘Saint-Thomas de Phordêsa’”, 82-83; R. LE DÉAUT, *Targum du Pentateuque* (SC 245; Paris 1978) I, 163, n. 17; L. SMOLAR – M. ABERBACH, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York – Baltimore 1983) 119; R. HAYWARD, *The Targum of Jeremiah* (The Aramaic Bible 12; Wilmington, DE 1987) 35, 135, n. 39; M. MAHER, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 1B; Collegeville, MN 1992) 58, n. 39; PATRICH, “On the Lost Circus”, 186-187.

⁽²⁸⁾ For discussion of some exceptions see NEWMAN, *Jerome and the Jews*, 264-268; McNAMARA, “Melchizedek”, 8-10.

⁽²⁹⁾ MILIK, “‘Saint-Thomas de Phordêsa’”, 77-84 (esp. 82-84), suggests that the Herodian hippodrome stood to the southwest of the Temple Mount; cf. PATRICH, “On the Lost Circus”, 186-187. In his treatment of the problem, Milik introduces several items of doubtful relevance and utility. For example, legends of the hippodrome of Solomon belong to a much later chapter of Jewish literature and do not shed light on the emergence of the targumic traditions here; see the criticism of PATRICH, “On the Lost Circus”, 184, n. 41. Milik understands

Yet before taking for granted that *Tg. Onq.* refers merely to an exegetical invention (which still remains something of an oddity) or to Herod's hippodrome in or next to Jerusalem, we should first take into account all the relevant geographical evidence. One place to begin is *Tg. Neb* to Jer 31,39, which, as mentioned, portrays the Horses' Gate as a royal stadium. Both Jer 31,39 and Neh 3,28 imply that the Horses' Gate is situated on the eastern side of Jerusalem. But besides the fact that it is difficult to imagine a hippodrome in the ravine of the Kidron Valley between the city wall and the Mount of Olives, we recall that Josephus explicitly placed the Herodian structure on the southern side of the city. Not surprisingly, no one, as far as I am aware, has suggested that we seek an historical hippodrome to the east. As we shall see, other data as well indicate that we should look elsewhere. For these reasons, we should probably view the usage of *Tg. Neb* as secondary, influenced by *Tg. Onq.* and lacking independent historical-geographical value.

Another way of approaching the problem is to look in other sources from antiquity for notions regarding the location of the Valley of the King and/or the meeting place of Abram, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek. According to 2 Sam 18,18, the Monument of Absalom stood in the Valley of the King. Josephus explains — presumably on the basis of local tradition — that the monument was a marble pillar erected in the Royal Valley at a distance of two stadia from Jerusalem, though he fails to state in which direction⁽³⁰⁾. The monument is

מִשֶּׁר דְּחוּמָא in *Frg. Tg.* to Gen 14,17 to be a reference to a royal theater, but McNAMARA, "Melchizedek", 5, is undoubtedly correct in taking it to refer to the "Oaks of Mamre" (cf. the reading in the margin of *Tg. Neof.*). Finally, as McNAMARA, "Melchizedek", 5-7, argues, Milik errs in identifying מִשֶּׁר פֶּרְדִּסָּא in *Tg. Neof.* to Gen 14,17 with the aforementioned valley of the hippodrome adjacent to Jerusalem. Rather, it represents a separate exegetical tradition which places the meeting between Abram and the king of Sodom next to the Dead Sea. To the sources discussed by McNamara, add Genesis Rabba 41,5, which identifies the Valley of Shaveh of Gen 14,17 with the Valley of Siddim of Gen 14,3, by the Dead Sea. Note also that this interpretation has even left its mark on the Christian pilgrimage tradition: the Piacenza pilgrim tells of seeing the Monument of Absalom — located by 2 Sam 18,18 in the Valley of the King — next to Zoar, at the southern end of the Dead Sea (*Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* 10, in *Itineraria et alia geographica* [CChrSL 175; Turnhout 1965] 134, 160-161 [recensio altera]). Consequently, we must also reject Milik's hypothesis concerning the identity of Phordesa of the Byzantine sources — apparently in the vicinity of Jerusalem — with מִשֶּׁר פֶּרְדִּסָּא of *Tg. Neof.*

⁽³⁰⁾ *Ant.* 7.243.

mentioned again as a familiar site in the Copper Scroll from Qumran⁽³¹⁾, roughly contemporary with Josephus and quite possibly referring to the same spot. Unfortunately, like so much else in the Copper Scroll, the exact location is unclear. Josephus' habitual carelessness with regard to numbers and measurements should also make us wonder how much confidence we should place in the precise distance he records. The relevance for our question of his testimony, as it stands by itself, can thus neither be affirmed nor denied⁽³²⁾.

Another source, however, yields far more promising results. According to the *Genesis Apocryphon* of Qumran, Abram was welcomed by the king of Sodom and by Melchizedek "while Abram camped in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King, the Valley of Beth Hakerem (בֵּית בִּקְעָת כְּרִמָּא)"⁽³³⁾. For the author of 1QapGen, the Valley of the King — or at least that part of it in which the encounter took place — is identified with the Valley of Beth Hakerem. How does that help us? First we must find Beth Hakerem, known to us from several Biblical passages, then we may look for its valley⁽³⁴⁾. Beth Hakerem has been identified by some with the village of 'Ain Karim, about six kilometers west of the Old City of Jerusalem,

⁽³¹⁾ 3Q15, col. X, ll. 12-14. See J.T. MILIK, "Le rouleau de cuivre provenant de la grotte 3Q (3Q15)", M. BAILLET – J.T. MILIK – R. DE VAUX, *Les 'petites grottes' de Qumrân. Textes* (DJD 3; Oxford 1962) 274, 295; J.D. LEFKOVITS, *The Copper Scroll. 3Q15: A Reevaluation* (STDJ 25; Leiden – Boston – Köln 2000) 348-349.

⁽³²⁾ Cf. below, n. 41.

⁽³³⁾ 1QapGen, col. XXII, ll. 13-14. Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20)* (BibOr 18/B; Roma³ 2004) 108-109; see commentary on pp. 244-246.

⁽³⁴⁾ Josh 15,59 (LXX); Jer 6,1; Neh 3,14. Cf. mMid 3,4, which mentions the Valley of Beth Hakerem, and note that the valley has insinuated itself into *Tg. Neb* to Jer 6,1, where בֵּית הַכְּרִמָּא has become בֵּית בִּקְעָת כְּרִמָּא (sic!) (*The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*. Vol. III, 149). Beth Hakerem is mentioned in the Copper Scroll as well, separated by a single locus from the Monument of Absalom, which we have just discussed (3Q15, col. X, l. 5 [DJD 3, 295]). This seems to imply the relative proximity of one to the other (cf. below, n. 41). The discussion that follows deals exclusively with Judean Beth Hakerem and not with the Galilean site of the same name. See the separate entries in Y. TSAFRIR – L. DI SEGNI – J. GREEN, *Tabula Imperii Romani. Iudaea – Palaestina* (Jerusalem 1994) 82. Another village of that name in the region of Shechem is mentioned in *Vitae prophetarum* 9; see A.M. SCHWEMER, *Studien zu den frühjüdischen Prophetenlegenden Vitae Prophetarum* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 50; Tübingen 1996) II, 43. The modern neighborhood of Beth Hakerem in Jerusalem likewise has nothing to do with our problem.

now absorbed within Jerusalem's extended city limits⁽³⁵⁾. This suggestion is beset, however, with various problems. For one thing, Jerome explicitly states that Beth Hakerem sits atop a mountain between Jerusalem and Tekoa, and by no stretch of the imagination can this be said of 'Ain Karim. For another, it is difficult to square the archeological remains at 'Ain Karim with the literary record of Beth Hakerem⁽³⁶⁾. Aharoni, on the other hand, has made a far more compelling case for identifying Beth Hakerem with the settlement he uncovered in excavations at Ramat Rahel more than forty years ago⁽³⁷⁾. Ramat Rahel sits on a prominent hilltop about four kilometers south of the Old City of Jerusalem, just to the east of the road to Bethlehem, which is situated roughly another four kilometers to the south. Between Ramat Rahel and Bethlehem, at the side of the road, stands the Tomb of Rachel (for which, incidentally, Ramat Rahel is named). I will not repeat the details of Aharoni's argument, but I emphasize that it was made without benefit of race-courses or hippodromes, whose importance — if not already apparent — will become clearer shortly.

If Beth Hakerem is indeed to be found at Ramat Rahel, then how do we define its valley? A maximalist position would be to embrace a network of valleys and declivities extending roughly from Baq'a⁽³⁸⁾ in Jerusalem in the north to the approaches of Bethlehem in the south⁽³⁹⁾.

⁽³⁵⁾ See for example M. AVI-YONAH, *Gazetteer of Roman Palestine* (Qedem 5; Jerusalem 1976) 38; G. REEG, *Die Ortsnamen Israels nach der rabbinischen Literatur* (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients. Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften 51; Wiesbaden 1989) 139-140; TSAFRIR – DI SEGNI – GREEN, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, 82.

⁽³⁶⁾ In *Hieremiam* 6,1, in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*. Pars I. Opera exegetica (CChrSL 74; Turnhout 1960) 63. For objections to the identification of Beth Hakerem with 'Ain Karim see Y. AHARONI, "Excavations at Ramat Rahel, 1954: Preliminary Report", *IEJ* 6 (1956) 153.

⁽³⁷⁾ AHARONI, "Excavations at Ramat Rahel, 1954", 150-155; ID., *Excavations at Ramat Rahel*. Seasons 1959 and 1960 (Roma 1962) 50-51; ID., *Excavations at Ramat Rahel*. Seasons 1961 and 1962 (Roma 1964) 122. Cf. FITZMYER, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 246. G. Barkay has proposed to identify the settlement at Ramat Rahel with במשה, known otherwise only from jar handle stamps, but this lone opinion has not found support; see *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. STERN) (Jerusalem 1993) IV, 1267. Equally unconvincing is the idiosyncratic proposal of G. GARBINI, "Sul nome antico di Ramat Rahel", *RSO* 36 (1961) 199-205; cf. ID., "La tomba di Rachele ed ebr. *bērâ 'ora doppia di cammino'", *BeO* 19 (1977) 45-48.

⁽³⁸⁾ The Arabic name — indicating a valley — speaks for itself.

⁽³⁹⁾ See MILIK, "Saint-Thomas de Phordêsa", 82.

A survey of place-names in both the Bible and rabbinic literature indicates, however, that in the period in question valleys are named after the settlements that are situated at their narrow, elevated ends and that the extent of the valley includes the associated delta opening out to the plain below⁽⁴⁰⁾. This suggests that we should conceive of the Valley of Beth Hakerem in more modest terms, beginning in the north in the general vicinity of Ramat Rahel itself and approaching Bethlehem to the south⁽⁴¹⁾.

Why should this spot, of all places, have been chosen as the backdrop for the meeting of Abram, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek? It might simply follow from a prior tradition about the location of the Valley of the King, one that is not contingent on the immediate context of Gen 14,17. Yet it is worth considering an additional possibility. It is in this place that Melchizedek presents Abram with bread and wine. According to our analysis of the sources, the venue of the encounter lies between Bethlehem — i.e., the “House of Bread” — and Beth Hakerem — the “House of the Vineyard”. This may simply be an ironic case of random agreement, but on the other hand it could be the product of a deliberate sort of geographical midrash.

We find ourselves at a fascinating point, one of striking agreement between two sources far removed from each other: LXX tells of a hippodrome on the road to Bethlehem, near the Tomb of Rachel, while *Tg. Onq.* tells of a hippodrome at the site of an encounter which 1QapGen seems to put at the same spot as the hippodrome of LXX.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ See Y. TEPPER – Y. SHAHAR, “Galilean Arbel”, *Cathedra* 61 (1992) 43-49 (Hebrew). Cf. B.-Z. ROSENFELD, “The Galilean Valleys (*Beq’aoth*) from the Bible to the Talmud”, *RB* 109 (2002) 66-100.

⁽⁴¹⁾ The problem of the northern limit cannot be separated from the complex question of the unity of the geographical conceptions of 1QapGen on the one hand and Josephus (and the Copper Scroll?) on the other (cf. above, nn. 30-31, 34). How much confidence should we place in the precision of Josephus’ testimony regarding the Monument of Absalom? Assuming its reliability, are we obliged to stretch the northern limit of the Valley of Beth Hakerem much farther than we would otherwise be inclined to do, to within two stadia (about 400 meters) of Jerusalem? Would the plain reaching to the very outskirts of Jerusalem take its name from the town situated almost four kilometers to the south? Or should we rather assume two separate traditions and not try to harmonize Josephus’ Royal Valley with the Valley of Beth Hakerem of 1QapGen? Perhaps the Valley of Beth Hakerem is understood by all to be only one part of the Valley of the King, and there is really no contradiction in the first place? These questions remain unanswered.

This correspondence is in fact an excellent piece of supporting evidence on behalf of Aharoni's proposed identification of Beth Hakerem, at which he arrived by other means. We *could* be speaking of two separate race-courses, but William of Occam would certainly not approve, and nor, I think, should we. The two problems should be treated as one⁽⁴²⁾. It follows that in each case we were correct to doubt the likelihood of the introduction of a hippodrome as a purely exegetical invention, divorced from the realities of historical geography. The hippodrome now looks real enough, and we must return to the question of its origins and historical context. As it stood north of the Tomb of Rachel, in the vicinity of Ramat Rahel, which I take to be Beth Hakerem, it would seem that it was meant first and foremost to serve the residents of that town and its environs, so let us take a closer look at what may be learned about the history of that place from Aharoni's excavations.

3. *Beth Hakerem in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods*

Beth Hakerem under Persian rule is described in Neh 3,14 as a district (פְּלִיָּה) capital⁽⁴³⁾. Aharoni's excavations at Ramat Rahel uncovered corroborative physical evidence in the form of numerous stamped jar handles which seem to attest to the existence of an administrative center and the collection of taxes in kind⁽⁴⁴⁾. Settlement

⁽⁴²⁾ Although the hippodromes of LXX and *Tg. Onq.* are occasionally mentioned in tandem in the literature on race-courses in antiquity, they are, to the best of my knowledge, always treated — with one exception — as two separate facilities. The exception (which proverbially proves the rule) is HAYWARD, *Targum of Jeremiah*, 35, 135, n. 39, who attributes the same equation to Le Déaut, though he may be reading too much into Le Déaut's laconic note (*Targum du Pentateuque*, III, 312, n. 21). Hayward, however, takes both LXX and *Tg. Onq.* to refer to Herod's hippodrome at Jerusalem (i.e., as others had done separately), with no mention of the geographical issues discussed above or of the linkage via 1QapGen.

⁽⁴³⁾ This paragraph summarizes some of Aharoni's major conclusions from his years of work at Ramat Rahel. See especially AHARONI, *Excavations at Ramat Rahel*. Seasons 1961 and 1962, 119-124.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Archeologists are increasingly of the opinion that not all the stamps were for tax purposes and that a portion served some other commercial function. See *inter alia* N. AVIGAD, "More Evidence on the Judean Post-Exilic Stamps", *IEJ* 24 (1974) 52-58; R. REICH, "Local Seal Impressions of the Hellenistic Period", *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969-1982*. Volume II: The Finds from Areas A, W and X-2. Final Report (ed. H. GEVA) (Jerusalem 2003) 256-262.

apparently continued uninterrupted from the Persian period through the beginning of the Hellenistic period, during which time Beth Hakerem seems to have retained its status as a regional administrative capital. This would be in keeping with the general character of Ptolemaic rule in Judea, which introduced a system of toparchies that were the heirs of the districts of Persian administration — a system which in general persisted with minor changes even under Roman rule⁽⁴⁵⁾. According to Aharoni, the site was abandoned at the beginning of the second century BCE, perhaps at the time of Antiochus III's conquest of Jerusalem around 199 BCE. Yet some of the stamp types which Aharoni attributed to the third century BCE were subsequently found in well-defined stratigraphic contexts of the second century BCE in excavations in Jerusalem⁽⁴⁶⁾, suggesting the possibility that settlement continued at Beth Hakerem later than he supposed. After its abandonment, the town remained uninhabited till some time in the first century BCE, but the restored settlement was of a different nature altogether. No longer a capital city, it reemerged in the Herodian period as a small village of artisans and farmers. It was probably during this chapter in its history that stones were brought from the Valley of Beth Hakerem for construction of the altar and its ramp in the Temple of Jerusalem (mMid 3,4). The site was abandoned once again at the time of the Great Revolt and was resettled only in the third century CE by soldiers of the Tenth Legion.

As far as may be learned from the material evidence currently at our disposal, Beth Hakerem was a major center during the Ptolemaic period (and perhaps later as well), but in the days of Herod its importance was greatly diminished. Comparing these conclusions to the literary sources discussed earlier, we note that on the one hand the heyday of Beth Hakerem corresponds chronologically to the testimony of LXX regarding the hippodrome (granting the common dating of LXX to the third century BCE), and on the other hand, a supposed

(45) A. SCHALIT, *König Herodes. Der Mann und sein Werk* (Berlin 1969) 183-229; Z. SAFRAI, *Boundaries and Administration in the Land of Israel in the Period of the Mishnah and Talmud* (Tel-Aviv 1980) 66-118 (Hebrew); H.M. COTTON, "Some Aspects of Roman Administration of Judaea/Syria-Palaestina", *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert* (Hrsg. W. ECK) (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 42; München 1999) 84-86.

(46) See AVIGAD, "More Evidence on the Judean Post-Exilic Stamps"; ID., *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive* (Qedem 4; Jerusalem 1976) 27-28; R. REICH, "Local Seal Impressions of the Hellenistic Period".

Herodian interpolation becomes even less likely than it appeared before.

According to this reading of the sources, LXX to Gen 48,7 raises the curtain for a fleeting moment over a small portion of Judea during one of the lesser known chapters of its history⁽⁴⁷⁾. What is revealed to us comes as something of a surprise: a fixture of Hellenistic culture in the heart of pre-Hasmonean Judea, several kilometers south of Jerusalem. For those following in the footsteps of Hengel, who argues for the existence of pervasive Hellenistic influence throughout Palestine long before the events that directly precipitated the Hasmonean revolt, this will undoubtedly be taken as welcome confirmation of an accepted notion⁽⁴⁸⁾. On the other hand, among various criticisms properly levelled against Hengel's thesis⁽⁴⁹⁾, it has been noted that he fails to discriminate sufficiently between the degree of Hellenization in the non-Jewish cities surrounding Judea and that of the Jewish towns of Judea itself⁽⁵⁰⁾. I do not seek to invalidate the distinction, but I do wish to point out that LXX to Gen 48,7, which may be one of the most significant pieces of evidence for Hellenistic influence in Ptolemaic Judea, has been ignored in this discussion. Note, however, that even if the argument presented here is correct, it does not necessarily imply the direct Hellenistic acculturation of Jews; a hippodrome could, for example have been built for the benefit of a

⁽⁴⁷⁾ This implies a certain degree of familiarity on the part of the translators with the contemporary reality of Palestine, though such knowledge need not have been derived from autopsy. On LXX and Palestinian tradition see M. HENGEL, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London – Philadelphia 1974) I, 102.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ HENGEL, *Judaism and Hellenism*; ID., "Judaism and Hellenism Revisited", *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (eds. J.J. COLLINS – G.E. STERLING) (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 13; Notre Dame 2001) 6-37.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See A. MOMIGLIANO, *JTS* 21 (1970) 149-153; L.H. FELDMAN, "Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* in Retrospect", *JBL* 96 (1977) 371-382; M.D. HERR, "Hellenism and the Jews in the Land of Israel", *Eshkolot* 2-3 (1977-1978) 20-27 (Hebrew); F. MILLAR, "The Background to the Maccabean Revolution: Reflections on Martin Hengel's 'Judaism and Hellenism'", *JJS* 29 (1978) 1-21; M. STERN, *Studies in Jewish History. The Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem 1991) 578-586 (Hebrew); J.J. COLLINS, "Cult and Culture: The Limits of Hellenization in Judea", *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, 38-61; L.H. FELDMAN, "How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?", *JSJ* 33 (2002) 290-313.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See the literature in the preceding note, and cf. in general M. STERN, "Judaism and Hellenism in the Land of Israel in the Third and Second Centuries BCE", *Studies in Jewish History*, 3-21 (Hebrew).

garrison of foreign soldiers⁽⁵¹⁾. At any rate, its very existence would be significant in its surroundings. Either a better account of the data than that which I have proposed must be offered, or else one must come to terms with its implications. Perhaps some of the uncertainty regarding the structure will be dispelled by future excavations at Ramat Rahel and its environs, since for the moment most of our knowledge of the settlement in the period in question comes from refuse and fills alone⁽⁵²⁾.

What can be said of the fate of the hippodrome of LXX in later generations? The only thing we know for a fact is that by Jerome's time, six hundred years later, no trace of a hippodrome was to be seen in the vicinity of Bethlehem. It would be helpful if we could establish the pedigree of the allusion to the royal hippodrome in *Tg. Onq.* to Gen 14,17, but this eludes us. We do not know when it was incorporated into targumic tradition; we do not even know if at the time of its incorporation remains of this structure were still discernible. In any event, if our analysis is correct, the substance of the passage should be counted among the earlier relics of targumic exegesis. Here again, some will find this conclusion very congenial⁽⁵³⁾. Since I do not, as a rule, share the conviction of those who seek the origins of the greater part of targumic tradition in the pre-Christian era, I refrain from generalizing from this one case.

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⁽⁵¹⁾ We recall, by way of comparison, the cavalymen of the military cleruchy under the command of Toubias the Jew in Transjordan. Their names suggest that most were gentiles, though at least one member of the cavalry seems to have been Jewish. See V. TCHERIKOVER, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge, MA 1957) I, 12-13, 118-121.

⁽⁵²⁾ How much remains to be learned of the area is suggested, for example, by the recent discovery and excavation of the Kathisma church. See R. AVNER, "The Recovery of the Kathisma Church and Its Influence on Octagonal Buildings", *One Land — Many Cultures*. Archeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffreda OFM (eds. G.C. BOTTINI — L. DI SEGNI — L.D. CHRUPCALA) (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio Maior 41; Jerusalem 2003) 173-186.

⁽⁵³⁾ In favor of an early dating for the bulk of the Palestinian targum tradition see M. McNAMARA, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (AnBib 27; Rome 1966) 64-66, 112-117, 256-258 (and cf. ID., "Melchizedek", 30-31); R. LE DÉAUT, "The Targumim", *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (eds. W.D. DAVIES — L. FINKELSTEIN) (Cambridge 1989) II, 563-590. Contrast the cautionary remarks of A. SHINAN, *The Embroidered Targum. The Aggadah in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem 1992) 193-196 (Hebrew).

The passing allusions to otherwise unknown hippodromes in LXX and *Tg. Onq.* on unrelated verses have provided us with an opportunity to explore the question of the geographical and historical realities which underlie the translations. I have argued that the translators did not create these structures — which should be seen as one — from the substance of the verses alone, but rather that both versions reflect the existence of an altogether real race-course in an area where we were not inclined to look for one. Perhaps it is time to start looking. In the final analysis, it is not the mere existence of a hippodrome on the road to Ephrath which should interest us, but what it might teach us about the penetration of Hellenistic culture into Judea years before the sound of the discus summoned the Antiochenes of Jerusalem to the palaestra⁽⁵⁴⁾.

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SUMMARY

LXX to Gen 48,7 refers to a hippodrome in the vicinity of Rachel's Tomb. This cannot be satisfactorily explained as an exegetical creation of the translator's imagination and probably refers to a genuine structure. This is also true of the stadium or hippodrome mentioned in *Tg. Onq.* to Gen 14,17, as the meeting place of Abram, the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek. Since 1QapGen locates the same meeting in the Valley of Beth Hakerem, which should be identified as the valley between Ramat Rahel and Bethlehem, it is reasonable to assume that both versions refer to the same hippodrome. There is no textual justification for assuming a late interpolation in LXX and no geographical or archeological justification for explaining these passages as allusions to a Herodian hippodrome. LXX may attest to a case of profound Hellenistic influence in Judea already under Ptolemaic rule.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ 2 Macc 4,14. See M. STERN, "Antioch in Jerusalem': The Gymnasium, the Polis and the Rise of Menelaus", *Zion* 57 (1992) 238 (Hebrew).

Judgment and Life for the Lord: Occasion and Theology of Romans 14,1–15,13

Scholars frequently cite the uniqueness of Romans as foundational for any interpretation of the letter as a whole. Hence the customary observation that Paul is writing to a congregation that he himself had not founded⁽¹⁾. The most striking feature of Romans, however, is its challenge to the methodological principle that all of Paul's undisputed letters are occasional pieces, addressing discrete concerns within specific communities⁽²⁾. I shall address this issue of the ambiguous occasional character of Romans throughout the development of this article. While agreeing with the above principle as advocated by scholars such as K. Donfried, I think that its application requires a widening of scope⁽³⁾. In accord with scholarly consensus, I do think that Romans addresses a real situation⁽⁴⁾. The situation, however, is nuanced in the sense that it reflects Paul's own historical circumstances as much as the historical circumstances of the community at Rome⁽⁵⁾.

Reconstructions of this passage as addressing either a discrete conflict within the Roman community or as totally general and removed from the social reality of the Roman Christians equally result

⁽¹⁾ While passages from the Roman historians Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) and Suetonius (*Claudius* 25.4) speak to a Christian presence in the city, the question of precisely when and how Christianity came to Rome is unknown. See R. BRÄNDLE – E.W. STEGEMANN, "The Formation of the First 'Christian Congregations' in Rome in the Context of the Jewish Congregations", *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome* (ed. K.P. DONFRIED – P. RICHARDSON) (Grand Rapids 1998) 117-127, here 127; see also F.F. BRUCE, "The Romans Debate-Continued", *The Romans Debate*. Revised and Expanded Edition (ed. K.P. DONFRIED) (Peabody, MA 1991) 175-194, here 178.

⁽²⁾ See K.P. DONFRIED, "False Presumptions in the Study to the Romans", *The Romans Debate*, 102-125, here 103.

⁽³⁾ DONFRIED, *The Romans Debate*, lxx.

⁽⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, lxix.

⁽⁵⁾ See W. LANE, "Social Perspectives on Roman Christianity", *Judaism and Christianity*, 197-198. Donfried provides a good summary of the major scholars who propose what he calls "the non-historical" view inclusive of Bornkamm, Fuchs, Jervell, Jewett, and Karris; see DONFRIED, "False Presumptions", *The Romans Debate*, 103.

in an impasse⁽⁶⁾. An interpretation is needed that adequately represents the polyvalent occasion of the letter: an occasion inclusive of the historical, rhetorical, and theological dimensions of Romans. In particular, recent scholarship on Romans has emphasized the importance of discerning the deeper theological intention of the letter for the purpose of explicating its occasion⁽⁷⁾. Continuing this approach, I will explore in this article the theological significance of Paul's discussion concerning the strong and the weak found in Romans 14,1–15,13 for the insight it yields into the occasion of Romans and the theology of the letter as a whole.

Integral to the scholarly debate over the occasion of Romans are Paul's comments addressed to the strong and the weak in Romans 14,1–15,13. 1) Do these chapters reveal an actual conflict within the Roman community? 2) Should the strong be understood as Gentiles and the weak as Jewish Christians? 3) Or can the categories of strong and weak best be understood as classifications of status inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles⁽⁸⁾? Although the specific terminology of the strong and the weak seemingly affords a desired specificity into the letter's historical setting⁽⁹⁾, commentators frequently struggle with the patently general tone of the passage⁽¹⁰⁾. To be sure, textual references to such details as the eating of vegetables (Rom 14,2), the observance of special days (Rom 14,6), and the consuming of meat and wine (Rom 14,21) have suggested to some commentators communal disputes over Jewish dietary laws or even syncretistic expressions of asceticism⁽¹¹⁾.

Undoubtedly, the most specific evidence suggestive of a conflict over food issues is Paul's use of the adjective *κοινὸν* in verse 14. Functioning as a technical term current in Hellenistic Judaism, this adjective certainly functioned to denote something as ritually tainted⁽¹²⁾. The weak, therefore, may have feared that meat available to the community had been slaughtered improperly or been associated

⁽⁶⁾ See R.E. BROWN – J.P. MEIER, *Antioch & Rome* (New York 1982) 111.

⁽⁷⁾ DONFRIED, *The Romans Debate*, lxi–lxii.

⁽⁸⁾ M. REASONER, *The Strong and the Weak*. Romans 14.1–15.13 in Context (Cambridge 1999) 45–63.

⁽⁹⁾ U. Wilckens, for example, sees a clear problem in view: *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK 6.3; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982) 79.

⁽¹⁰⁾ J. FITZMYER, *Romans*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 33; New York 1992) 687; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas 1988) 795.

⁽¹¹⁾ B. BYRNE, *Romans* (Sacra Pagina 6; Collegeville 1996) 404.

⁽¹²⁾ See WILCKENS, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 90.

with pagan sacrifices⁽¹³⁾. This reconstruction, however, is far from certain; and indeed the passage may be functioning within a larger context of promoting a more general ethical message of tolerance to be practiced within the community⁽¹⁴⁾.

More recently, M. Reasoner has added a decidedly sociological dimension to the debate. Reasoner argues that Paul's terminology of strong and weak pertains to social status classifications current in imperial Rome⁽¹⁵⁾. According to Reasoner, the terminology of weak and strong indicates two separate groups at odds with one another⁽¹⁶⁾. In particular, Reasoner contends that the strong are calling the weak superstitious because of the latter's scruples regarding food and observance of days⁽¹⁷⁾.

Despite such considerations, it remains the case that the text of Romans bears tenuous support for such a hypothesis of a community hampered by discord. It is precisely here that we arrive at the issue of the ambiguous occasional character of Romans. Paul certainly speaks often in this letter about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, this of itself might seem to lend support to Reasoner's reconstruction of two groups at odds in the Roman congregation. However, it must be emphasized that Paul invariably couches this relationship in generalized terms, reflecting on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles as a whole and seldom in terms of individual Jews and Gentiles⁽¹⁸⁾.

Moreover, the manner in which Paul reflects on this relationship bears a marked theological concern. Thus, after the description of both Gentile and Jewish sinfulness in Rom 1,18–2,11, Paul arrives at the conclusion in Rom 3,20 that everyone (πᾶσα σάρξ) is under God's judgment. Rom 3,23 further clarifies this idea of radical inclusiveness with the conclusion that "all have sinned" (πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον). A

⁽¹³⁾ The presence of the technical term κοινόν in itself does not prove an unambiguous situation wherein ethnic Jewish Christians took offense at lax Gentile Christian practices, as if the strong must refer to Gentiles and the weak to Jews. Paul, after all, is certainly to be reckoned among the strong despite being ethnically Jewish. .

⁽¹⁴⁾ BYRNE, *Romans*, 406.

⁽¹⁵⁾ REASONER, *The Strong and the Weak*, 45–63.

⁽¹⁶⁾ REASONER, *The Strong and the Weak*, 58.

⁽¹⁷⁾ REASONER, *The Strong and the Weak*, 159–174. See also Theophrastus, *Characters* 16.

⁽¹⁸⁾ W. MEEKS, "The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul", *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1988) 17–29, here 25.

more positive application of this universalizing theme occurs in those passages where Paul argues for the unique significance of justification by faith (Rom 4,1-12). By utilizing the figure of Abraham as a model of faith, Paul argues that the reality of God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) benefits both the circumcised and the uncircumcised as a consequence of their common response of faith. Just as apart from the Gospel judgment and condemnation meet Jew and Greek alike, so justification is open to both Jew and Gentile through the response of faith. If one of Paul's principal concerns in Romans, therefore, is to clarify the relationship between Jew and Gentile within the accomplishment of God's salvific work in Christ, then an interpretation of the occasion of Romans is needed that deals adequately with Paul's theological vision.

1. *The Thematic Structure and Vocabulary of Romans 14,1-15,3*

One of the salient rhetorical features of Romans is the frequency with which Paul utilizes a diatribal style throughout the course of his argument⁽¹⁹⁾. Since the diatribal style employs a fictitious interlocutor, Karris argues that Paul is not dealing with an actual historical situation in Romans but with general paraenesis⁽²⁰⁾. Diverging from Karris' observation for the time being, I want to concentrate, instead, on the question of the function of the diatribal style in Paul's argument. What precisely is Paul attempting to accomplish by employing such a style of argumentation? More specifically, what is the nature of the response that Paul hopes to engender among his audience? To begin to answer such questions one must remember that the principal function of the diatribe lay in its instructional intention. By employing the diatribe, a given author or speaker sought to enlighten or instruct a particular student or audience⁽²¹⁾.

Perhaps the best example of the instructional function of the diatribal style appears in Rom 2,1-11 and 2,17-29, which respectively depict a dialogical engagement with an imaginary interlocutor. The overall structure as well as themes of this chapter bears a close resemblance to the themes and structure of Romans 14, as I will

⁽¹⁹⁾ S.K. STOWERS, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (SBLDS 57; Chico, CA 1981) 7-78, 93-96.

⁽²⁰⁾ R.J. KARRIS, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans", *Romans Debate*, 65-84, here 70, n.32.

⁽²¹⁾ D.E. AUNE, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia 1986) 219.

demonstrate below. What is immediately striking in Rom 2,1-11 is the preponderance of vocabulary indicative of judgment. The verb κρίνω occurs four times (Rom 2,1a.b.c.3) and the noun κρίμα two times (Rom 2,2,3). One also finds related judgment vocabulary in the occurrence of the verb κατακρίνω (Rom 2,1) and the noun δικαιοκρίσις (Rom 2,5). All of these words indicative of judgment occur in the relatively short space of the first five verses. The setting of Rom 2,1-11 is the hypocritical person who judges another and yet practices the very things that are repudiated. Paul endeavors to rebuke this fictive Jew and enlighten him to the fact that such behavior provokes the judgment of God⁽²²⁾. The deeper religious and cultural presupposition behind Rom 2,1-11 can be found in Rom 1,18-32, where Paul echoes the standard Hellenistic Jewish critique against gentile religiosity and immorality. For Paul, as for the authors of the intertestamental literature in general, the verdict against such gentile wickedness is one of divine wrath⁽²³⁾.

If we grant the instructional character of the diatribal style, Paul's aim then appears as one of instructing and enlightening the Roman Christians with regard to one of the central theological features of his gospel: namely, God's impartial judgment⁽²⁴⁾. This same motif of God's impartial judgment recurs again in the encounter with the fictive Jew in Rom 2,17-29. What Paul endeavors to teach his audience by means of these dialogical encounters is the equal status of Jew and Gentile under the all encompassing reality of God's judgment.

When we turn to Romans 14 we see a suggestive parallel to Rom 2,1-11 in terms of both rhetorical structure and vocabulary. As in Rom 2,1-11 a heavy preponderance of judgment words is in evidence: κρίνέτω (Rom 14,3); κρίνων (Rom 14,4); κρίνει (Rom 14,5); κρίνεις (Rom 14,10); κρίνωμεν (Rom 14,13); κρίνων (Rom 14,22); κατακέκριται (Rom 14,23). Moreover, the entire passage has a distinctly general and indefinite tone, just as Rom 2,1-11 does. For instance, Paul

⁽²²⁾ Most commentators see the implied interlocutor as a Jew. See: FITZMYER, *Romans*, 297; J.D.G. DUNN, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Dallas 1988) 79; C.E.B. CRANFIELD, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh 1985) I, 138; BYRNE, *Romans*, 80.

⁽²³⁾ See T.H. TOBIN, "Controversy and Continuity in Romans 1:18-3:20", *CBQ* 55 (1993) 304; see also J.D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids 1998) 115-116; for texts see *Wis* 11-15; *Pss. Sol.* 15,8-12.

⁽²⁴⁾ Keck notes this instructional intention: See L. KECK, "What Makes Romans Tick?" *Pauline Theology* (ed. D.M. HAY – E.E. JOHNSON (Philadelphia 1991) III, 3-29, here 23.

opens 2,1-11 with the generalized apostrophe: ὦ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων. Similarly, in Rom 14,2 Paul introduces the strong and the weak person in a quite general fashion by employing either a relative pronoun or a present participle used attributively: ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει. Perhaps the strongest parallel in terms of both indefinite phrasing and similar subject matter can be seen in Rom 14,4 and Rom 2,1. In Rom 2,1 we read: Διὸ ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὦ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων· ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις, τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ πράσσεις ὁ κρίνων. In Rom 14,4 we read: σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἄλλότριον οἰκέτην; In both verses the activity of judgment is central; moreover, in both verses Paul takes exception to the one who presumes to engage in such an activity.

On the basis of these observations might we contend that Romans 14 shares something of the same diatribal tone of Rom 2,1-11, if not the more formal characteristics? Clearly, the diatribal style of 2,1-11 is more patent. Still, in addition to the judgment vocabulary it cannot be denied that throughout Paul's discussion of the strong and weak a no less dialogical encounter of direct address is maintained. As in 2,1-11, where Paul addresses the fictive Jew, so Paul addresses both the strong and the weak brother: "Who are you who judges the servant of another?" σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἄλλότριον οἰκέτην; (Rom 14,4); "Why do you judge your brother?" Σὺ δὲ τί κρίνεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; (Rom 14,10). These verses reveal a diatribal tone not only in their quality of direct address, but also in their phrasing as pointed questions; indeed such confrontational questions characterize the diatribal style⁽²⁵⁾.

Lastly, we should note the tone of the foregoing questions as well as the tone of Romans 14 taken as a whole. Paul endeavors in his argument to criticize on principle such displays of presumptuous and arrogant behavior in the community, just as he endeavors to criticize hypocritical behavior in Romans 2,1-29. As well as functioning, therefore, as an instructive tool, the diatribal style serves as an argumentative aid for checking arrogance and presumption⁽²⁶⁾. Such an admonishing tone is present in Romans 14 and further strengthens the instructive function of this chapter by illustrating the inherent presumption of inappropriate judgment against the brother. That Paul

⁽²⁵⁾ See A. MALHERBE, *Moral Exhortation. A Graeco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia 1986) 219.

⁽²⁶⁾ J.D.G. DUNN, "The Formal and Theological Coherence of Romans", *Romans Debate*, 245-250, here 249.

is concerned that such presumption not emerge in the community is shown in the general paraenesis of Rom 12,3: λέγω γὰρ διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν.

The claim that Romans 14 is basically diatribal in tone might gain greater plausibility if we are able to show the instructional intention of the chapter. With regard to Rom 2,1-11 and Rom 2,17-29, I suggested that Paul's intention was primarily an instructional one. By virtue of such diatribal argumentation, Paul's aim emerges as one of enlightening or instructing his Roman audience concerning God's impartial judgment. Similarly, we might also view Paul's argument in Romans 14,1-15,3 as primarily instructive in light of the connection Paul draws between certain acts of judgment and the relation of these acts to God. Indeed, one of the strongest tendencies of Paul's argument in this section of Romans is to place human judgment alongside the larger reality of God's judgment in an effort to relativize mere human distinctions⁽²⁷⁾.

Beginning in Romans 14,3, Paul places all the various acts of human judgment within the larger context of God's purposes and intentions by means of a repeated use of the words "Lord" (κύριος), "Christ" (χρίστος), and God (Θεός). Throughout 14,1-15,3, the word "Lord" appears eight times, "Christ" four times, and "God" ten times. This marked emphasis on the divine prerogative first occurs in Rom 14,3, where Paul grounds his initial injunction in the prior judgment of God: "For God has received him" (ὁ Θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο). Paul then proceeds in the next nine verses to apply this principle of God's initiative to the various manifestations of human judgment. "Who are you who is judging the servant of another? Before his own Lord (τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ) he stands or falls; and he shall be upheld for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Rom 14,4); "The one who holds an opinion as to the day, holds an opinion before the Lord (κυρίῳ)" (Rom 14,6); "The one who eats, eats for the Lord (κυρίῳ); and the one who does not eat, does not eat for the Lord and is giving thanks to God (τῷ Θεῷ)" (Rom 14,6); "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we belong to the

⁽²⁷⁾ See W. MEEKS, "Judgment and the Brother", *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament*. Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis (ed. G.F. HAWTHORNE – O. BETZ) (Grand Rapids 1987) 290-300, here 297. On the general significance of the theme of judgment in Paul see J.L. KREITZER, "Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology" (JSNTSS 19; Sheffield 1987) 107-112.

lord (τοῦ κυρίου ἑσμέν)” (Rom 14,8); “For this reason Christ (χρῖστος) died and lived in order that he might be the master of the dead and living” (Rom 14,9); “And why are you judging your brother? Or you, Why are you despising your brother? For we all will stand by the side of the judgment seat of God (τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ)” (Rom 14,10); “Therefore, accordingly, each one of us will give an account concerning himself to God (τῷ θεῷ)” (Rom 14,12). Finally, Paul concludes his argument in 15,3 with an injunction that places the ideal of communal love in a deeply divine context “For Christ did not please himself”.

If we are correct in viewing the section comprised by Rom 14,1–15,3 as diatribal in tone and therefore not directed to an actual problem among contending parties, we must now clarify this instructional intention⁽²⁸⁾. In verses 1-12 Paul attempts to show that human judgment in all of its various dimensions is precluded by virtue of the divine prerogative. On the one hand, judgment is precluded due to God’s prior and overriding reception of the brother (Rom 14,3); the life that the brother now lives is a life lived before God (Rom 14,8). On the other hand, judgment is precluded since it is only God who may properly judge the brother on the last day when indeed everyone will appear before God’s seat to present an account of their life (Rom 14,10-12).

For Paul, therefore, present judgment against one’s brother, as well as any discernment over food or the question of days, pales in comparison to the greater reality of justification (Rom 14,3). Moreover, since the faithful brother belongs to the Lord, it is ultimately the Lord’s decision whether a particular individual stands or falls (Rom 14,4). Paul’s way of thinking here is in some respects similar to the argument he makes in Romans 5. In that chapter, Paul contrasts the reality of sin and death with the surpassing divine reality of what has been accomplished in Christ⁽²⁹⁾. Similarly, in Rom 14,1-12, Paul puts the whole question of present judgment against one’s brother into a larger frame of divine reference in order to instruct his Roman audience in the deeper reality of the divine activity, which has both a present and future significance. The two poles of this surpassing reality are: 1) that God has received the faithful brother, and 2) that it is God alone who will rightly perform the activity of judgment on the last day.

⁽²⁸⁾ J. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul. A Critical Life* (Oxford 1996) 334.

⁽²⁹⁾ B. BYRNE, “The Type of the One to Come (Rom 5:14): Fate and Responsibility in Romans 5:12-21”, *ABR* 36 (1988) 19-30, here 28.

Perhaps the clearest evidence for the instructional intention behind Rom 14,1–15,13 lies in these chapters' more concrete application of the general paraenesis of Romans 12–13. The common themes and emphases are various. For example, the marked divine context in which Romans 12 begins and Romans 13 ends is given a profound practical and communal significance in Romans 14. Just as the individual members of the community comprise "one body in Christ" (Rom 12,5), so the observances of the strong and the weak with respect to food and days takes place in the deeper reality of God's reception of the brothers (Rom 14,6). For Paul, present judgment against the brother is inappropriate since it neglects to see the new reality that ensues from the power of the Gospel: namely, that we now belong to the Lord (Rom 14,9). Compare Paul's concluding injunction in Rom 13,14: "But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ". Similarly, the general love command of Rom 12,9–10 is given more specific shape in Rom 14,15, where not walking according to love as a consequence of inappropriate judgment is actually to "destroy the other on behalf of whom Christ died" (Rom 14,15). What is striking about this passage is that Paul views the rejection of the love command as resulting in the *actual* destruction or condemnation (Rom 14,23) of the brother.

It is precisely with reference to such condemnation and destruction that Paul's argument assumes a different direction after 14,12 as it deals with the consequences that can occur if present human judgment prevails. Once again the divine context is foremost in Paul's mind and it is to the deepest significance of this fact that Paul now directs his argument.

2. Inappropriate Judgment and Its Effects

In terms of the structure of Rom 14,1–23, it is useful to delineate Paul's discussion of the strong and the weak under two thematic headings. Rom 14,1–12 can be seen as Paul's theoretical foundation for the exclusion of judgment. As we have observed, Paul points to both the surpassing reality of God's gracious reception of the brother and the future judgment at the last day as the two definitive realities that preclude present human judgment against others in the community. I shall now show how Rom 14,13–15,13 builds upon Paul's previous argument by drawing out the particular consequences which can occur if inappropriate judgment in the community prevails over God's deeper judgment and purposes.

With a view to summing up his previous argument, Paul begins verse 13 with an injunction that the brothers no longer pass judgment upon one another: (Μηκέτι οὖν ἀλλήλους κρίνωμεν). From this point on, the shape of Paul's argument assumes a new emphasis as he describes the destructive consequences which ensue when the brothers do not walk according to love but instead judge and make distinctions with regard to food and drink. Paul commences this stage of his argument in Rom 14,14 by first declaring that "nothing is unclean (κοινόν) in itself, except to the one who considers it to be unclean, to that one it is unclean" (κοινόν)⁽³⁰⁾. What is important to observe is the paradoxical conclusion Paul arrives at: nothing is indeed unclean, and yet for the person who considers it to be unclean it actually is (εἶναι) unclean. In effect, Paul appears to be saying that the reality of a given thing or activity can in certain instances be transformed. In other words, something as inherently positive as food can, under certain circumstances, be transformed into something negative or even destructive; something essentially clean can become unclean.

I raise this observation since the remainder of Romans 14 appears to be primarily concerned with this very theme of negative or destructive transformation. According to Paul, judgments about food that engender discord in the community actually serve to transform the positive reality of God's work in Christ into a negative reality of destruction. Put another way, for Paul the activity of inappropriate judgment does not simply hurt or grieve (λυπεῖται) the brother's feelings or moral sensibilities; rather, inappropriate judgment transforms the new reality of life in the lord τοῦ κυρίου ἔσμεν (Rom 14,8) into a reality of condemnation.

A selection of verses might make this theme of negative transformation clearer. In a number of instances Paul utilizes vocabulary suggestive of destruction in either the imperative or indicative mood: "Do not by means of food be destroying (ἀπόλλυε) your brother on behalf of whom Christ died (Rom 14,15)". "Do not on account of food be destroying (κατάλυε) the work of God (Rom 14,20)". "It is not noble to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor to do anything by means of which your brother stumbles (προσκοπτεῖ) (Rom 14,21)". "But with respect to the one who doubts, if he eats he has been condemned (κατακέκριται), because it is not from faith; and everything that is not from faith is sin (Rom 14,23). The use of the

⁽³⁰⁾ For a discussion on the question of food and days see R. DEDEREN, "On Esteeming One Day Better than Another", *AUSS* 9 (1971) 16-35, here 19-35.

indicative mood in verses 21 and 23 connotes factual reality: the brother actually stumbles and is condemned. Although Paul's use of the imperative mood does not indicate factual reality, still the underlying sense of such imperatives reveals Paul's conviction that the work of God and the brother could in fact be destroyed. Moreover, we should observe in these verses the repeated connection Paul draws between destruction on the one hand and the divine activity on the other. Quarrels over opinions regarding food have not only a communal significance but a divine significance, too. This is the case for Paul since the community is the one body of Christ (Rom 12,5) and therefore lives in the new and powerful reality engendered by the reception of the gospel in faith. Paul's description of the gospel in Rom 1,16 should be interpreted in a very literal and almost physical sense. The Gospel is the "power of God" (δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστίν) for the purpose of salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1,16). The intention of God's power is a beneficent one; it is a power graciously bestowed upon all for the sake of salvation. Yet Romans 14 reveals how the positive essence of God's power for salvation can in fact be transformed into a power of destruction and condemnation as a result of improper conduct. The improper conduct as described in Rom 14 is the activity of inappropriate judgment in all its manifestations.

This theme of the transformation of beneficent reality into destructive reality is especially clear in 1 Cor 11,27-32⁽³¹⁾. This passage is doubly helpful in illuminating Romans 14,1-15,13 since the theme of judgment in 1 Cor 11,27-32 is prominent. What is important to note in the Corinthians' passage is Paul's emphasis upon the negative consequences that occur when individual members of the community engage in improper conduct; in this case, the improper conduct is connected with the Lord's Supper:

So that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy fashion will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a person examine himself and in this way let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks while not distinguishing the body eats and drinks judgment (κρίμα) against himself. For this reason many among you are weak and ill and a large number have died. But if we were judging ourselves (διεκρίνομεν) we

⁽³¹⁾ Various scholars have noted the similarity Romans 14 bears to 1 Cor 8-19: see KARRIS, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans", *The Romans Debate*, 65-84; FITZMYER, *Romans*, 71; BRUCE, "The Romans Debate-Continued", *The Romans Debate*, 185; DONFRIED, "False Presumptions", *The Romans Debate*, 109.

would not be being judged (ἐκρινόμεθα). But while being judged (κρινόμενοι) by the Lord we are being punished in order that we might not be condemned (κατακριθῶμεν) with the world.

The points of contact between this passage and Romans 14 are suggestive. In both passages we encounter the pervasive theme of judgment. Moreover, the way in which Paul describes judgment in 1 Cor 11,27-32 is significant: the judgment Paul calls for is not judgment against others in the community but rather self judgment (see 1 Cor 11,28.31)⁽³²⁾. Another similarity between the two passages lies in the deeply divine context in which the argument functions. For example, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to discern the body of the Lord; it is precisely such discernment of divine reality which provokes worthy behavior. Similarly, within the context of his discussion of the weak and strong Paul points to the deeper reality of the divine activity: the members of the Roman community belong to the Lord (Rom 14,8). Within such a divine setting the activity of inappropriate judgment regarding food serves only to destroy the brother on behalf of whom Christ died (Rom 14,15).

Perhaps the strongest point of contact between the two passages concerns Paul's conviction that inappropriate behavior transforms the reality of blessing into a reality of destruction. In the passage from 1 Corinthians the result of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner is judgment against oneself, as manifested in the community by instances of weakness, illness, or even death (1 Cor 11,29-30). Similarly, in Romans 14,1-15,13, inappropriate judgment against the brother results in both the destruction of the brother who has been received by God as well as the destruction of the work of God that was meant for salvation.

On the basis of the above passage from 1 Corinthians I am inclined to think of the destruction described by Paul in Romans as a very real and physical one. Thus when Paul speaks of the brother being injured in Rom 14,15 I understand Paul to mean this quite literally, just as he affirms in the Corinthians' passage that many are weak and ill and a large number have died as a result of participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy fashion⁽³³⁾.

⁽³²⁾ See MEEKS, "Judgment and the Brother", 293.

⁽³³⁾ Thus I think the destruction envisioned by Paul goes beyond merely offending a weaker brother's moral integrity. See C.E.B. CRANFIELD, "Some observations on the interpretation of Romans 14,1-15,13" *Communio Viatorum* 17 (1974) 193-204, here 198.

Perhaps we might argue, then, that in both 1 Cor 11,27-32 and Rom 14,1-15,13 the eschatological reality of God's power or blessing is the pervasive background for much of Paul's thinking dealing with the inner life of the community. The faithful community now lives in the unique sphere of divine power that on the one hand imparts the blessing of God's righteousness, but also demands a response of obedience on the other: "But since you were set free from sin, you have become slaves to righteousness" (Rom 6,18). Therefore, what takes place in the community can have divine implications as well as merely communal ones. Indeed, what is so interesting to observe here is that according to Paul such eschatological blessing is never so complete that it cannot be transformed into something negative by unworthy or inappropriate behavior.

How do these reflections help in clarifying both the occasion of Rom 14,1-15,13 as well as the theology of Romans as a whole? The profound eschatological perspective that I have just ascribed to Paul would seem to point to a dire situation in the Roman community that Paul seeks to address. Yet if it is true that Romans functions more as an instructional argument rather than as a response to a communal situation of discord, then the question of what Paul wants his Roman audience to come away with from his argument becomes significant. On one level, if the Roman audience was genuinely suspicious of Paul's ethical integrity due to his law free stance as espoused in Galatians (see esp. Gal 3,10), then such a radically eschatological appraisal of inappropriate judgment against fellow Christians would serve to engender among Paul's audience a renewed vision of the apostle. From this angle, the occasion of the strong and the weak points less to any discord in the Roman community and more to Paul's keen awareness of his renegade reputation (see Rom 6,15 and 15,30-31).

Still, there may yet be another way to conceive of the occasion of these chapters which takes into account the central theological theme of Romans as a whole, namely: the relationship between Jew and Gentile. In the context of his discussion of the strong and the weak might Paul be attempting to illustrate a vivid application of this relationship in the context of God's salvific activity in Christ? I shall explore this question in the final section of this article.

3. The Work of God for Both Jew and Gentile

One of the central themes in Romans is Paul's conviction that Jew and Gentile alike share a similar status under God's judgment and

salvation. Apart from the Gospel both Gentile and Jew languish under sin, yet through the response of faith both Jew and Gentile share equally in the new reality of the power of God's salvation. Such equality under the divine perspective is expressed by Paul in numerous passages: Rom 1,16; 2,9-10; 3,9.29; 9,24; 10,12. Is it possible that Romans 14,1-15,13 expresses a similar insight in the more practical realm of ethical behavior? Certainly the divine perspective is clear in these chapters, since Paul endeavors to show that certain types of behavior have divine implications. But can we also discern in these chapters the more specific theological theme of the relation between Jew and Gentile in the context of God's larger intentions? Although it is true that Paul does not speak explicitly of either Jew or Gentile in these chapters until Rom 15,8, still the description of certain members of the community as either strong or weak might hint at these categories on a more rhetorical and theological level as I shall attempt to argue below.

Whether the weak are in fact Jewish Christians and the strong Gentile Christians, or whether the weak are Gentile Christians who felt that certain elements of the Jewish law were still binding, is a question that can never be settled unequivocally for all its abiding historical interest. I have attempted in this article to argue that there are certain clues in these chapters that reveal the likelihood of the absence of any actual conflict or community discord between rival groups. One instead needs to read Paul's discussion concerning the strong and the weak in light of Paul's rhetorical and theological situation. The insights of P. Sampley may profitably be brought to bear here. Sampley makes the point that Paul utilizes a rhetorical strategy of oblique or figured speech in these passages. Reasoning that issues of Kasrut and Sabbath observance may have been contentious issues in this particular community, Paul generalizes in order to have the readers reflect on their reality of living together⁽³⁴⁾. I find Sampley's model persuasive since it steers a middle position by recognizing that on the one hand, differences of opinion on such issues likely existed in the Roman community, but that Paul is not addressing an actual dispute that he knows about on the other.

In other words, the virtue of Sampley's model is that it combines a

⁽³⁴⁾ J.P. SAMPLEY, "The Weak and the Strong: Paul's Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1-15:13", *The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honor of W. A. Meeks* (ed. L.M. WHITE – O.L. YARBROUGH (Philadelphia 1995) 40-52.

situational with a non-situational interpretation of the strong and the weak⁽³⁵⁾. I would like to build on Sampley's insights by offering a more theological suggestion. Quite apart from historical considerations, I think these chapters show clearly enough Paul's reflection on the relationship between Jew and Gentile on a theological level, i.e., the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the eyes of God. Perhaps, on just such a theological level, the one who eats vegetables and observes one day more than another functions as a literary theological model for both ethnic Jewish Christians and conservative Gentile Christians, while the one who eats all things and makes no distinction with respect to days functions as a literary model for both Gentile Christians and more liberal Jews like Paul (Rom 14,1-5). When the strong and the weak are viewed in this way, as literary theological models for Jews and Gentiles conceived as a whole, then Rom 14,1-15,13 emerges as the concrete theological explication of the theme of God's gracious and impartial call of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 9,24)⁽³⁶⁾.

It is important at this point to say where I stand in relation to Karris' now classic non-situational approach to the discussion of the strong and the weak. Unlike Karris, I do not think Paul's discussion of the strong and the weak is simply a kind of canned general instruction designed to address possible situations that might arise in any Christian community⁽³⁷⁾. Such a non-situational view is contrary to the fundamentally practical cast of the uncontested Pauline letters⁽³⁸⁾. Building once again on Sampley, I would contend that Paul's argument combines situational as well as non-situational elements in the service of a larger theological vision in the following way. First, Paul's use of a highly traditional Christological statement in the prescript of Romans (Rom 1,3-4), his uncustomary use of sacrificial imagery (Rom 3,21-26), and finally his concern to stress the ethical force of his Gospel (Rom 6,1) all reveal that although this community is primarily comprised of gentiles, the Roman church is also strongly motivated by Jewish concerns. This Jewish cast suggests that Paul knows that in the unique social environment characteristic of Roman Christianity in the

(35) A.J.M. WEDDERBURN, "The Purpose and Occasion of Romans Again", *Romans Debate*, 195-202, here 202.

(36) F. LEENHARDT, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London 1961) 346.

(37) KARRIS, "Romans 14:1-15:13", *The Romans Debate*, 84.

(38) SAMPLEY, "The Weak and the Strong", *The Social World of the First Christians*, 52.

mid first century opinions concerning food and Sabbath observances were undoubtedly present⁽³⁹⁾. This is different from saying, however, that Paul is writing to allieve an actual full blown conflict between literally strong and weak Christians conceived of as separate groups or parties at odds with one another. Such a reconstruction exceeds the evidence at hand, as I see it. Second, it is necessary to note how the situational and non situational dimensions are joined by Paul in a decidedly theological manner. Ultimately, for Paul judgment against fellow Christian brothers and sisters is wrong since both the strong and the weak have equally been received by God (Rom 14,8), and therefore they share equally in the new reality of the Gospel accomplished through Christ's death (Rom 14,15). The central Pauline theme of God's impartiality thus assumes more concreteness in these chapters by virtue of its ethical application to the new life that is lived in the one body of Christ (Rom 12,54). For Paul such new existence is a blessing that imparts the power of God's salvation to both the strong and weak, to both Jew and Gentile. The new life, however, is a blessing at once fragile and strong, since it is a blessing of divine presence either to be received or destroyed to the degree that the community walks according to love (Rom 14,15).

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SUMMARY

This article explores Paul's discussion concerning the strong and the weak in Rom 14,1–15,13. My thesis is that Paul's comments in this section of the letter function neither completely as a response to an actual problem in Rome, nor as entirely general paraenesis. Rather, Paul's comments function simultaneously on both a situational and non-situational level. Considering that specific concerns over food were likely operative in the Roman congregation, Paul employs non-specific language in this section in order to espouse a larger theological vision of the essential unity of Jew and Gentile under God's salvation in Christ.

⁽³⁹⁾ This is my chief reason for disagreeing with Karris. Paul is not generalizing from pastoral experience in Corinth. Rather, Paul is cognizant of the Jewish character of Roman Christianity and argues accordingly.

Rivalry and Resignation: Girard and Qoheleth on the Divine-Human Relationship ⁽¹⁾

This article examines the repeated proverb in Qoheleth, הכל הבל ורעות רוח (“All is vanity and a chasing after wind” [NRSV]) and interprets it as a prime example of what René Girard calls mimetic rivalry, expressed in Qoheleth as the conflict present between humanity and the gods that is fueled by the frustration at the gulf between mortal human existence and the immortal divine life. The proverb can thus be paraphrased as, “All is mortal, but strives for immortality”, or “All is fleeting, yet desires permanence”, or even, “All is human, but strives for divinity”. Qoheleth uses the proverb to express the hopelessness of this desire for what humanity cannot have, and this supports the sage’s admonition that people focus on what they can realistically achieve. It may thus be seen that Qoheleth’s understanding of the divine-human relationship is part of a centuries old religious vision in the ancient Near East, rather than any radical departure from some perceived orthodoxy.

1. *Philological and Grammatical Considerations*

From a formal standpoint, the phrase, הכל הבל ורעות רוח in Qoheleth⁽²⁾ is a bicolon consisting of two nominative clauses. The repetition of *he* and *lamed* in the first colon, and of *resh*, *shureq*, and the glottal stop of the gutturals, *ayin* and *het* in the second colon, along with the linking of the two cola by *waw*, denote gnomic or proverbial speech⁽³⁾. Looking at the phrase from a philological and grammatical

⁽¹⁾ This article is a revision of a paper read at the 2004 joint meeting of the SBL and the European Association of Biblical Studies at the University of Groningen. I am grateful for the helpful suggestions and criticisms offered by those who attended the meeting. Additionally, M. Fox was kind enough to read an earlier draft.

⁽²⁾ It occurs seven times in the book (1,14; 2,11, 17, 26; 4,4 16; 6,9). Although 4,16 uses the noun רעיון instead of רעות, the difference in meaning is negligible (M. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up. A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* [Winona Lake 1999] 42, 45).

⁽³⁾ J. JARICK, “The Hebrew Book of Changes: Reflections on *hakkol hebel* and *lakkol zeman* in Ecclesiastes”, *JSOT* 90 (2000) 79-86; and D. FREDERICKS, *Coping With Transience: Ecclesiastes on Brevity in Life* (Biblical Seminar 18; Sheffield 1993) 12.

standpoint, I will argue that: 1) The meaning of הבל in the first colon is a figurative extension of the term's concrete meaning of "vapor", and refers to the transient nature of human life; 2) The meaning of רוח in the second colon does not refer to the wind, but rather to the spirit, specifically understood as the source of life that comes from God. Consequently, the second colon, רעות רוח, expresses the futility of human effort, not by creating an image of trying to catch something insubstantial, but rather by portraying human desire to possess something that is proper only to God.

a) הבל as Human Transience

Much research has been done on the meaning of הבל in Qoheleth, with a wide variety of proposed translations⁽⁴⁾. Yet whether translated by a single term⁽⁵⁾ or by a variety of terms that seek to be sensitive to the context of each occurrence of הבל⁽⁶⁾, there is a wide consensus that the term can be expressed by concepts such as, "fleeting", "temporary", and "insubstantial", that are used to convey the idea of transience⁽⁷⁾, a figurative extension of the term's root meaning, "vapor". More specifically, הבל describes the insubstantiality of human

⁽⁴⁾ FOX, *A Time to Tear Down*, 27-42 and C.L. SEOW, "Beyond Mortal Grasp: the Usage of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes", *AusBR* 48 (2000) 1-2.

⁽⁵⁾ A practice dating back to the consistent use of ματαιότης for הבל in the LXX (J. JARICK, *A Comprehensive Bilingual Concordance of the Hebrew and Greek Texts of Ecclesiastes* [SBLSCS 36; Atlanta 1993]), and followed by Jerome's use of *vanitas*, which is still to be found in many modern translations, e.g., C.L. SEOW, *Ecclesiastes* (AB 18C; New York 1997). Still other translations render הבל by its root meaning of "vapor, breath", e.g., N. LOHFINK, *Qoheleth* (Minneapolis 2003) or, most recently, "absurd", e.g., FOX, *A Time to Tear Down*, 8-14, 27-49; D. MICHEL *Untersuchungen zur Eigenart des Buches Qohelet* (BZAW 183; Berlin 1989) 40-51; and B. BERGER, "Qohelet and the Exigencies of the Absurd", *Biblical Interpretation* 9 (2001) 141-179.

⁽⁶⁾ D. MILLER, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes*. The Place of Hebel in Qoheleth's Work (SBL Academia Biblica 2; Atlanta 2002) 2-14, 89-90, 153, 181-194; W. ANDERSON, "The Semantic Implications of הבל and רעות רוח in the Hebrew Bible and for Qoheleth", *JNSL* 25 (1999) 59-73; A. CERESKO "The Function of *Antanacsis* (מִשׁ) 'to find' // מִשׁ) 'to reach, overtake, grasp') in Hebrew Poetry, Especially in the Book of Qoheleth", *CBQ* 44 (1982) 551-569; and, M. SNEED, "(Dis)closure in Qohelet: Qohelet Deconstructed", *JSOT* 27 (2002) 115-126.

⁽⁷⁾ D. MILLER, "Qohelet's Symbolic Use of הבל", *JBL* 117 (1998) 437-454; R.B.Y. SCOTT *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* (AB 18; New York 1965) 209; and SEOW, "Beyond Mortal Grasp", 4-7.

existence which, like vapor, is fleeting, transient, and vanishes without a trace⁽⁸⁾.

A few examples from Qoheleth will demonstrate this. In Chapter 2, Qoheleth recounts his experiment in hedonism in a descriptive passage framed by the use of הָבֵל together with the phrase “I said in my heart”, used to express his despair at the realization that the wise and powerful must die just as the foolish and the weak⁽⁹⁾. Because the nature of human life is temporary, the awareness of death taints every experience of pleasure by reminding Qoheleth of its impermanence. Qoh 3,19 observes that human beings die just as the animals do, and that this is because (כִּי) all is הָבֵל, that is to say, temporary. Even more explicit is the description in 6,12 of the human life span as “a breath” (הָבֵל) and “a shadow” (צֶל), parallel terms that evoke the images of ephemerality and the false sense of substance⁽¹⁰⁾.

Similarly, in the occurrences of הָבֵל in the proverb under discussion here, the term is used by Qoheleth to express the impermanence of humankind in the face of death⁽¹¹⁾. Twice in the “autobiographical” passage of Chapter 2 just mentioned, the proverb emphasizes how death renders one’s accomplishments useless and reveals the wise to have no advantage over fools. Qoh 2,11 uses it as an exclamation after a sweeping statement in which he steps back to consider the entirety of his life’s effort. That Qoheleth is looking at the sum total of his entire existence is made clear in the redundant nature of the statement. “All the deeds that my hands have done” is set in parallelism with “the toil with which I toiled to do (it)”, culminating in the conclusion of the proverb (introduced by הִנֵּה), that all such human toil is fruitless because of our transient nature. Qoh 4,16 speaks of the youth who succeeds the great king and, although he led an

(8) FREDERICKS, *Coping With Transience*; SEOW, “Beyond Mortal Grasp”, 4. Also significant is the fact that הָבֵל is the spelling of the name “Abel” in Genesis 4; see H. GUNKEL, *Genesis* (Macon 1997) 42; C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis 1994) 285; and K. SEYBOLD, “הָבֵל”, *TDOT* III, 313-320.

(9) וְדַבַּרְתִּי בִלְבִי in v. 1 and אֲמַרְתִּי אֵי בִלְבִי in v. 15.

(10) Compare the use of these two terms in Ps 39, 6-7: “See, you have made my days few and brief; and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely all humanity stands as only a breath; surely each person walks like a shadow” (אִךְ הִכְלָה־הָבֵל כָּל־אָדָם נֶצַב אִךְ־בְּצֶלֶם יִתְהַלֵּךְ־אִישׁ) and Ps 144,4: “Humanity is like a breath; its days like a passing shadow” (אָדָם לְהָבֵל דְּמָה יָמָיו כְּצֶל עוֹבֵר); cf. MILLER, *Symbol and Rhetoric*, 75-78; and M. FOX, “The Meaning of *Hebel* for Qoheleth”, *JBL* 105 (1986) 420-421.

(11) MILLER, *Symbol and Rhetoric*, 154-155.

almost inconceivably large number of people (וַיֵּאָדָקֵן לְכָל־הָעָם לְכָל), (אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה לַפֶּיטָה), there will be no glory for the young man in the future; this is הַבֵּל. The term is also used in 9,9 as an adjective describing human life, as Qoheleth counsels his reader to enjoy the fleeting days given to a man by God with the woman he loves⁽¹²⁾.

b) רוּחַ as Life-Breath

The two nouns of the second colon are in a construct relationship. While commentators agree that רָעוּת expresses the attempt to control, either by mastery, or capture, or destruction, there is continued speculation on its root, with proposals from both Hebrew (רָעָה: “pasture”, “shepherd”; רָעָע: “be evil”, “smash”, “shatter”) and Aramaic (רָעוּ: “will”, decision)⁽¹³⁾. The fact that the phrase is as an objective genitive, with רוּחַ the object of רָעוּת, gives the phrase the sense that humankind’s desire is to capture, rule over, control, or master רוּחַ⁽¹⁴⁾. That being said, there has not been much disagreement over the meaning of the second term in the bicolon. For the most part, רוּחַ is translated as “wind” and the phrase “striving after wind” is read as a metaphor for futility. A representative example is C. L. Seow, who cites Hos 12,2, where the phrase “herds the wind” (רָעָה רוּחַ) is in parallelism with “pursues the east wind” (וּרְדָף קִדְיִם), and then cites examples in the Wisdom Literature where רוּחַ signifies the wind as something worthless or futile⁽¹⁵⁾.

Yet, רוּחַ also has a figurative meaning that denotes spirit, either as the agent of divine action or the animating principle of humanity⁽¹⁶⁾. The term occurs throughout the OT with this meaning, including the Wisdom Literature in general and Qoheleth in particular⁽¹⁷⁾. By way

⁽¹²⁾ Jerome rendered the Hebrew חַיִּי הַבֵּל as *vitae instabilitatis tuae*, one of the rare occurrences in the Vg where הַבֵּל is not translated by *vanitas*.

⁽¹³⁾ On the objective genitive, see JOÜON-MURAOKA, § 129e, who notes that the objective genitive may take an impersonal noun (e.g., כְּתֹרַת זֶרֶם in Isa 32,2). On the other hand, Fox reads it as a genitive of material, and translates “windy thoughts” (*A Time to Tear Down*, 48).

⁽¹⁴⁾ HALAT, s.v., רָעָה III or רָעָה II. This is how the LXX read the term, translating it with a participial form of πρᾶσσω. T. Perry (*Dialogues with Kohelet. The Book of Ecclesiastes* [University Park 1993] 69) derives רָעוּת from רָע, “friend”, and translates the second bicolon as: “an affair with the wind”.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Seow (*Ecclesiastes*, 122) citing Prov 11,29; 27,16; 30,4; Job 15,2; 16,3; followed by MILLER, *Symbol and Rhetoric*, 92-94.

⁽¹⁶⁾ HALAT, s.v., רוּחַ, sections 6-12 and H. FABRY, “רוּחַ”, *TDOT* 13:365-402 for parallels in Northwest Semitic and Akkadian.

⁽¹⁷⁾ E.g., Job 12,10; 32,8; 33,4; 34,14; Prov 15,4; 16,2; Pss 104,29; 146,4.

of example, in Job 34,14 Eliphaz ponders the possibility should God “take his spirit (רוח) back to himself”, the consequence will be that “all humankind will return to dust” (v. 15). Prov 16,2 speaks of divine judgement by appeal to the imagery of God weighing the spirits of humankind (כל־דרכי־איש נֶךְ בְּעֵינָיו וְתֵכֵן רוּחוֹת יְהוָה).

This is also the obvious meaning of the term in several occurrences in Qoheleth. In 3,19; 11,5; 12,7, רוח describes the animating principle of humanity that is given by God at birth and taken back by God at death. Similarly, in 8,8 רוח is paired with the time of death to express our inability to prevent death when it comes⁽¹⁸⁾.

My contention is that the meaning of רוח in the phrase, רעות רוח is also to be understood as referring to the animating life force that comes from God to humankind, and that this is set in opposition to הבל in the first colon, which is used to describe the transient nature of human life. This reads the *waw* in the bicolon as disjunctive, and casts the phrase as an antithetical parallelism, which Qoheleth also uses in Qoh 7,4 and 10,2⁽¹⁹⁾.

In this regard, the translation of רוח in the LXX merits mention. In Greek, two common words used to refer to the wind are ἄνεμος and πνεῦμα. Of these two, πνεῦμα can also refer to one's soul or spirit, analogous to the two uses of רוח in Biblical Hebrew. While LXX Qoheleth uses both ἄνεμος and πνεῦμα to render רוח throughout the book, πνεῦμα is used exclusively in every instance of the bicolon under investigation here, as well as in the texts in which רוח clearly refers to the human spirit or the divine gift of life. This speaks to the probability that the LXX translator also understood רוח in the bicolon to refer to something other than the wind. Added to this is the fact that he chose ἄνεμος to translate רוח in 5,15 and 11,4, where it clearly refers to the wind⁽²⁰⁾. The translator's use of multiple Greek words to

Seow's remark after citing examples from Wisdom Literature in which רוח means simply “wind”, is somewhat misleading: “In every case ‘wind’ indicates futility or meaninglessness” (*Ecclesiastes*, 122). One must be careful to read the phrase “In every case”, as referring only to the seven examples SEOW has cited from Proverbs and Job, and not to the entire corpus of Wisdom Literature.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The presence of death and battle in 8,8 speaks against translating רוח as “wind” in the verse (LOHFINK, *Qoheleth*, 106).

⁽¹⁹⁾ L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* [Subsidia Biblica 11; Rome 1988] 85-94. Consequently, הבל should be added to עפר and בשר as antonyms listed for רוח discussed by Fabry (*TDOT* XIII, 379), although Fabry reads הבל and רוח in *Qoheleth* as complementary, rather than disjunctive (374).

⁽²⁰⁾ JARICK, *Comprehensive Bilingual Concordance*, 267-268.

render a single Hebrew term in Qoheleth leads to some important conclusions regarding the bicolon under investigation:

1) The translator understood there to be different meanings to רוח and, in three instances, chose to translate it with a Greek term (ἄνεμος) that refers specifically to the wind.

2) In the bicolon, where רוח is unanimously read by modern commentators and translators as “wind”, the LXX translator chose to use πνεῦμα instead of ἄνεμος⁽²¹⁾. This demonstrates that, at the least he did not see the term as exclusively referring to the wind and, as I maintain, shows actually that he understood רוח in the bicolon as a reference to the life breath.

2. *Qoheleth and the Divine-Human Relationship*

Looking at the Book of Qoheleth as a whole, it is clear that interpreting the recurring proverb, הבל הבל ורעות רוח along the lines of the hierarchy of immortal divinity over mortal humanity introduces nothing new thematically into the book.

First, one notes that outside of the proverb under investigation here, there are two instances in Qoheleth where the problem of the gulf between God and humanity is expressed using both הבל and רוח. Qoh 3,19 dwells on the reality that because humans and animals are both mortal, they both share the same רוח, and he attributes our common fate with the animals to the fact that all is הבל⁽²²⁾. Our mortality shows that the divine life does not stay with us forever, and this transitory nature renders our existence no more advantageous than that of the beasts. Similarly, the vivid description of the end of human life in Qoh 12⁽²³⁾ culminates in vv. 7-8 with the image of the separation caused by the dust of the human body returning to its elemental source in the ground (וישב העפר על-הארץ כשהיה) and the spirit returning to God whence it came (והרוח תשוב אל-האֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַןָהּ). Immediately after

⁽²¹⁾ F. VINEL, *L'Ecclésiaste* (La Bible D'Alexandrie 18; Paris 2002). The Hexapla fragments of Aquila and Theodotion translate רוח in the bicolon with ἄνεμος (VINEL, *Ecclésiaste*, 107).

⁽²²⁾ F. KUTSCHERA, “Kohelet: Leben im Angesicht des Todes”, *Das Buch Kohelet. Studien zur Struktur, Geschichte, Rezeption und Theologie* (ed. L. SCHWEINHORST-SCHÖNBERGER) (BZAW 254; Berlin 1997) 363-376; F. LAURENT, “L’homme est-il supérieur à la bête? Le doute de Qohélet (Qo 3, 16-21)”, *RSR* 91 (2003) 11-43.

⁽²³⁾ Although Seow makes a strong case for reading 12,2-7 eschatologically (“Qoheleth’s Eschatological Poem”, *JBL* 118 [1999] 209-234); overview in M. FOX, “Aging and Death in Qohelet 12”, *JSOT* 42 (1988) 55-77.

follows the exclamation, הכל הבל. . הכל הבל in v. 8, which not only functions as a refrain concluding the entire book, creating a frame with its occurrence in 1,2, but also as the climax of Qoheleth's résumé of the human life in 11,8 – 12,8. Even in youth, notes 11,8, life is nothing but הבל, and Qoheleth advises the young to enjoy pleasure while they can during these days of youth, before the inevitable decline and death. And because death is the result of God's choice to reclaim the רוח given to us, an eventuality we are powerless to prevent, Qoheleth ends his description of human life — at the graveside, as it were — with an exclamation of humanity's utter transience.

Throughout his book, Qoheleth dwells at length on the pain and frustration caused by our knowledge of death and of the eternal life beyond our reach. This is probably most succinctly expressed in 3,11, where Qoheleth notes that God has placed “eternity” into the mind of humanity, but has also established that humanity can never fully grasp the extent of divine existence. The exact meaning of העלם in this verse has been debated. One proposed solution repoints it to read עלם (“ignorance”)⁽²⁴⁾, but this term does not occur elsewhere in Biblical Hebrew and is based on a dubious etymological derivation. העלם has also been emended to read עמל (“toil”), which, while having the advantage of being a frequently occurring word in Qoheleth⁽²⁵⁾, makes the already enigmatic phrase מראש ועד־סוף even more opaque. How does God's placing “toil” in the human heart make it impossible for humanity to grasp what God does? Moreover, while עמל occurs immediately prior to 3,11 in v. 9, v. 10 uses הענין, another favorite term of Qoheleth's, to describe human effort. In a similar vein are attempts to read העלם in 3,11 as expressing the created world, or extended duration⁽²⁶⁾. Yet it must be noted that elsewhere in Qoheleth (Qoh 1,4; 12,5) עלם is used to express the idea of eternity. The idea of eternity in 3,11 makes clear its synonymous relationship with המעשה אשר־עשה, האלהים מראש ועד־סוף, and emphasizes the contrast that God has given humankind the awareness (נתן בלבם) of permanence⁽²⁷⁾, but has prevented them from ever possessing it (לא־ימצא)⁽²⁸⁾.

⁽²⁴⁾ G. BARTON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes* (ICC; Edinburgh 1908) 105.

⁽²⁵⁾ FOX, *A Time to Tear Down*, 210-211. BHS lists no variants.

⁽²⁶⁾ R. MURPHY, “On Translating Ecclesiastes”, *CBQ* 53 (1991) 573.

⁽²⁷⁾ CERESKO, “The Function of *Antanacsis*”, 565-567.

⁽²⁸⁾ J. CRENSHAW, “The Eternal Gospel (Ecclesiastes 3:11)”, *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions*. Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom (Macon 1995) 565-567; and SEOW, *Ecclesiastes*, 162-163.

In this regard, mention must also be made of Qoh 6,10, “Because it is known what humanity is, they are not able to dispute with one who is stronger than they”⁽²⁹⁾. The “stronger” party in this verse is a veiled reference to God, and expresses Qoheleth’s belief that humankind can never enter into conflict with God with any hope of victory⁽³⁰⁾.

My re-reading of this particular phrase in Qoheleth, while departing from the majority of scholarship, in fact supports and illustrates some of the recognized themes in the book. For example, to say that the colon, רעות רוח, refers to humanity’s attempts to grasp at divine immortality also understands the phrase as an expression of hopeless futility, which is how the standard reading of “chasing after the wind”, reads it. However, now the exact nature of the futility is made much more clear: we are doomed to failure by the very object of our desire, viz., the divine life. The proverb is read as a statement that human life is a struggle against limitations imposed by God, and that this tension between our mortal “portion” and our desire is the cause of human suffering⁽³¹⁾. Thus, my proposed interpretation of the couplet serves both to affirm its focus on the pointlessness of human effort but also demonstrates that the proverb expresses Qoheleth’s understanding of the divine-human relationship. To say that humankind strives for that of which it knows, but cannot have, expresses the profound disjunctions between the divine and the human, and between the scope of human knowledge and its limited existence⁽³²⁾. These disjunctions, and their resultant suffering, are what Qoheleth grapples with in his book, and he advises that they can only be dealt with by means of an evasion that narrows the scope of human vision to the present moment and its concrete pleasures⁽³³⁾. Reading the proverb as an antithetical

⁽²⁹⁾ Fox (*Time to Build*, 247-248) and Seow (*Ecclesiastes*, 230-232) propose emendations for this verse, but these changes do not affect the contrast Qoheleth makes between divine power and human frailty.

⁽³⁰⁾ Cf., Qoh 5,2: “For God is in heaven, and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few”.

⁽³¹⁾ CRENSHAW, “The Eternal Gospel”, 552-554; Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 31.

⁽³²⁾ Although Qoheleth is not primarily concerned with the problem of human knowledge (N. LOHFINK, “Is Kohelets הבל-Aussage Erkenntnistheoretisch Gemeint?” *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* [ed. A. SCHOORS] [BETL 136; Leiden 1998] 59).

⁽³³⁾ BERGER, “Qohelet and the Exigencies”, 147; S. DE JONG, “God in the Book of Qohelet: A Reappraisal of Qohelet’s Place in Old Testament Theology”, *VT* 47 (1997) 162-163; T. PERRY, “Kohelet’s Minimalist Theology”, *Qohelet in*

parallelism contrasting divine power with human limits⁽³⁴⁾, as I propose, gives the phrase a more pointed tone consonant with Qoheleth's outlook elsewhere in the book. The proverb thus functions as a succinct expression of Qoheleth's theology.

3. *On Divine and Human Rivalry: A Girardian Reading of Qoheleth*

For over two decades, the wide-ranging and comprehensive anthropological theory of René Girard concerning sacred violence and scapegoating has been influential in biblical studies⁽³⁵⁾. It should be noted, however, that a problematic aspect of Girard's approach lies in the privilege he grants to the Bible as a unique divine revelation which, because God takes the part of the victim, breaks the dominance of sacred violence⁽³⁶⁾. Even more troubling for exegetes is Girard's developmental reading of the Christian Bible, in which he claims that the revelation of God's stance against sacred violence is but partially revealed in the Old Testament, and made fully visible only in the New⁽³⁷⁾.

Despite this shortcoming in Girard's overall understanding of sacred violence, one particular component of this thought, namely what he terms "mimetic desire", can be used to clarify Qoheleth understanding of the divine-human relationship. Girard's discussion of mimetic desire occurs throughout his major published works⁽³⁸⁾, and

the Context of Wisdom, 451-456; and H.-P. MÜLLER, "Wie Sprach Qohälät von Gott?" *VT* 18 (1968) 507-521.

⁽³⁴⁾ The use of *הביל* to denote idols in contrast to the living God (e.g., Jon 2,9; Ps 31,7) is another example of the term being used in a disjunctive manner to show the difference between the human and the divine.

⁽³⁵⁾ René Girard and *Biblical Studies* (ed. A. McKenna) (*Semeia* 33; 1985) and J. Williams, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence* (New York 1991).

⁽³⁶⁾ *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Baltimore 1978) 141-280, 416-431; *Job: The Victim of His People* (Stanford 1987).

⁽³⁷⁾ "[O]nly the texts of the Gospels manage to achieve what the Old Testament leaves incomplete... bringing to completion an enterprise that the Judaic [*sic*] bible did not take far enough, as Christian tradition has always maintained" (*Things Hidden*, 158). W. Wink (*Engaging the Powers. Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* [Minneapolis 1992]) criticizes Girard for this triumphalism. For a summary of Girard's thought, see Williams, *The Bible, Violence and the Sacred*, 1-31; and *Violent Origins*. Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation (ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly) (Stanford 1987) 6-22.

⁽³⁸⁾ *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (Baltimore 1965) 1-112; *Things Hidden*, 283-431; *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore 1977) 143-192.

draws upon Freud's early work on parent-child relationships. Before he developed the notion of the Oedipus Complex (which for Girard is an unnecessary limiting of a basic insight concerning rivalry) Freud noted the following paradox at the heart of the parent-child relationship. On the one hand, the child is told to be like the parent and so to look to the parent as a model of behavior. On the other the child is simultaneously told not to be like the parent and so to deny any aspirations toward the parents' rights and responsibilities⁽³⁹⁾. Borrowing a phrase from the study of schizophrenia by Gregory Bateson, Girard expresses this paradox as "the double bind", which may be put succinctly: "Taken as model, imitate me; and as rival, do not imitate me"⁽⁴⁰⁾. Desire, and the resulting conflict, are thus the necessary outcomes of mimesis. If one is to be like another, then one must desire what the other desires. Doing so amounts to nothing less than the desire on the part of the imitating party to replace its model. Imitation becomes rivalry; flattery becomes aggression.

Girard conceptualizes this relationship in terms of a triangle between the subordinate, who desires to be like the model; the object, which is the thing desired, and the mediator, the superior who commands both imitation and distinction. In Girard's terms, these three parts of the triangle are: 1) the subject, who desires 2) the object, that which is desired but is the possession of 3) the mediator, so called because it is only through the mediator, as superior commanding imitation, that the subject becomes aware of the object as desirable. The artificial distinction made by the subject concerning the object and the mediator is often a necessary guard against the subject, as subordinate, facing the reality that its desire is really to replace the mediator. Yet paradoxically, at the same time it also allows the subject to view the mediator as separate from the desired object, and an obstacle that prevents the fulfillment of the subject's desire. This separation of the object and the subject's focus on it intensifies to such a degree that the object is invested with a reality above and beyond that of the subject's. This creates what Girard calls "metaphysical desire", i.e., the view of the object as possessing infinite capacity for desirability and fulfillment⁽⁴¹⁾.

⁽³⁹⁾ *Violence*, 169-174.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ *Things Hidden*, 291-293.

⁽⁴¹⁾ *Things Hidden*, 296-297. This is reminiscent of P. TILlich's discussion of "ultimate concern", and of the danger of making finite realities objects of ultimate concern (*Dynamics of Faith* [New York 1957] 1-29. For Tillich, "the

Equally important in this arrangement is the proximity between subject and mediator. The smaller the difference, the greater the rivalry, due to the ongoing presence of the mediator and the object in the subject's frame of reference. Girard terms this "internal mediation". The opposite case, in which the distance between the subject and the mediator is so great as to make impossible any real hope of the subject appropriating the object and replacing the mediator, is what Girard calls "external mediation". This arrangement makes rivalry impossible⁽⁴²⁾.

Girard offers detailed analysis of how mimetic rivalry between the gods and humankind is present in Greek myth⁽⁴³⁾. Through portrayal of close interaction between humanity and divinity, myth creates a situation of internal mediation that invariably is expressed as desire and rivalry when a human upstart attempts to usurp divine prerogatives, e.g., Theseus, or Oedipus. Such attempts are, however, doomed to failure, because the gods use their power to pull back (or send the human rival toppling down) and reaffirm their unassailable sovereignty. Divine removal shatters human aspirations to possess the reality of the gods, and the consequent re-establishment of external mediation is portrayed in the stunning reversals of fortune for which Greek epic and tragedy is known. Thus myth both assumes and establishes the distance between gods and humanity. In Girardian terms, myth reinforces the external mediation of the gods by means of vivid portrayal of the suffering involved when a person acts as if the gods occupied a place of internal mediation⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Briefly, we can see this pattern at work in some of the most well known biblical and Ancient Near Eastern myths⁽⁴⁵⁾. Both *The Epic of*

more idolatrous a faith the less it is able to overcome the cleavage between subject and object" (12). Girard would concur.

(42) See *Deceit*, 9-10. Note also the meaning of distance for Girard: "the distance between mediator and subject is primarily spiritual" (9).

(43) In particular, Girard looks at *The Iliad*, *Oedipus the King*, and *The Bacchae*.

(44) For the function of myths as authoritative rationales for the religious hierarchy that places humanity at the service of the gods, see W. BURKERT, *The Creation of the Sacred. Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge 1996) 80-101. Note also Girard's observation regarding *The Bacchae*: "Insofar as divinity is real, it cannot serve as a prize to be won in a contest. Insofar as it is regarded as a prize, it is merely a phantom that will escape man's grasp and turn to violence" (*Violence*, 143).

(45) It merits mention that Girard deals with the social ramifications of the idea of divinity as a check on violence. In contrast, but not in contradiction, I see

Gilgamesh and *Adapa* deal with the paradox of human wisdom, which gives us an awareness of the divine, and of human mortality, which keeps us from becoming divine. To put it according to Girard's thought, these myths express and resolve the double bind involved both in being like the gods and in being forever their servants. Gilgamesh learns, through his fruitless and belligerent attempt to gain immortality, that it is a prerogative reserved by the gods for themselves alone. Siduri in the Old Babylonian Version, as well as Utnapishtim in the Standard Version express this. Gilgamesh learns this knowledge after extensive interaction with divine powers — Humbaba, Ishtar, the Bull of Heaven, Siduri, and Utnapishtim. Put another way, Gilgamesh exists in a state of internal mediation with the divine, and so attempts to usurp the object, i.e., immortality, by means of force. The knowledge that Gilgamesh gains through his epic journey beyond the rim of the world is that he may not have the object of his desire. His return to Uruk, and death, constitutes establishment of a state of external mediation in which the immortal life of the gods is placed forever beyond his reach⁽⁴⁶⁾. Moreover, this awareness of his own limitations is what, for the author of the Standard Version's prologue, constitutes Gilgamesh's wisdom.

Similarly, Adapa, who is possessed with great wisdom, infringes upon the realm of the gods when he curses the wind. When summoned to the palace of Anu, again a state of internal mediation in which the distance between humanity and the gods is greatly reduced, he is

myth as related to this social function, insofar as myth disguises the absence of the gods by the language of transcendence. In this regard, see P. VEYNE, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago 1988); B. LINCOLN, *Theorizing Myth. Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago 1999) 3-43.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ W. MORAN, "The Epic of Gilgamesh: A Document of Ancient Humanism", *Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 22 (1991) 15-22; reprinted in *The Most Magic Word* (ed. R HENDEL) (Washington 2002) 5-20; T. JACOBSEN, *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven 1976) 195-219. On the relationship between *Qoheleth* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, see C. UEHLINGER, "Qohelet im Horizont mesopotamischer, levantinischer und ägyptischer Weisheitsliteratur der persischen und hellenistischen Zeit", *Das Buch Kohelet*, 180-92; J.Y.-S. PAHK, "Qohelet e le tradizioni sapienziali del Vicino Oriente Antico", *Il Libro del Qohelet. Tradizione, redazione, teologia* (eds. G. BELLIA - A. PASSARO) (Milan 2001) 117-143; W. LAMBERT, "Some New Babylonian Wisdom Literature", *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 30-42; J. DE SAVIGNAC, "La Sagesse du Qôhéleth et L'Épopée de Gilgamesh", *VT* 28 (1978) 318-323.

tricked by his patron Ea into refusing immortality, thus re-establishing humanity's position as the wise servants of the gods⁽⁴⁷⁾. The remark of Anu after Adapa's refusal, that Adapa be returned to his own, mortal, world, demonstrates the re-establishment of distance, as in the case of the conclusion to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

In the OT, perhaps the parade example of mimetic rivalry between humans and God is the creation story of Genesis 2-3. Adam and Eve exist in a state of internal mediation. They live in a paradise with the power of divine knowledge and immortality literally "in the midst" of their existence. When they usurp divine wisdom, Yahweh sees this as a threat. His fear in 3,25 that human beings will become like the gods is an expression of the mimetic rivalry — having what the mediator has makes the subject a replacement of the mediator. To re-establish his authority as superior, Yahweh creates a situation of external mediation through the expulsion of the man and the woman from the garden and the posting of a divine sentry to prevent any return⁽⁴⁸⁾. In Genesis 11 one can also clearly see in the attempt to build the tower with its top in the heavens, an example of human aggression vis-à-vis the divine. Similarly, Yahweh's confounding of human language, so that humankind must cease its building, is another example of the institution of distance between God and his rival subordinates⁽⁴⁹⁾.

While Qoheleth does not use mythic narrative to express this idea, he is clearly concerned with the suffering that derives from humanity's attempts to seize what is proper to God. Qoheleth, to use Girardian terms, repeatedly stresses to his reader that the relationship between humankind and God is one of external mediation⁽⁵⁰⁾. He resolves the

⁽⁴⁷⁾ BARTON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 100; S. IZRE'EL, *Adapa and the South Wind: Language Has the Power of Life and Death* (Winona Lake 2001) 120-125.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Cf., GIRARD, *Things Hidden*, 142. On the relationship between *Qoheleth* and Genesis 2-3, see R.N. WHYBRAY, "Qoheleth as a Theologian", *Qoheleth in the Context of Wisdom*, 239-265; DE JONG, "God in the Book of Qohelet", 165; PERRY, *Dialogues with Kohelet*, 24-26. H. Simian-Yofre ("Conoscere la Sapienza: Qohelet e Genesi 2-3", *Il Libro del Qohelet*, 314-336) specifically notes how both texts understand wisdom as the realization of limitations.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ P. Davies (*Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* [JSOTSS 204; Sheffield 1995] 95-113) reads the Abraham cycle as a story of rivalry between Yahweh and Abraham.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Schoors ("God in Qoheleth", *Schöpfungsplan und Heilsgeschichte. Festschrift für Ernst Haag zum 70. Geburtstag* [ed. R. BROSHDSCHIEDT – T. MENDE] [Trier 2002] 251-270) argues that the term אֱלֹהִים in the book may be best translated as "divinity".

double bind by advising that humanity ignore the wisdom which makes us God-like, i.e., a situation that may be construed as one of internal mediation that creates the situation of mimetic rivalry on the part of human beings. He stresses the pointlessness of this metaphysical desire by means of a poetic, gnomic expression that succinctly and euphonically expresses the gulf between humanity and God. The gnomic character of Qoh 1,14 calls to mind Greek phrases that also express human limitations in respect to the gods by means of sapiential speech, such as the maxims from Delphi: γνῶθι σαυτόν (“Know thyself”) and μὴδὲν ἄγαν (“Nothing too much”), or the Orphic aphorism, σῶμα-σῆμα (“body-tomb”).

One significant result of using Girard’s concept of mimetic desire to read Qoheleth is that it reveals the book to be an expression of one of the most common beliefs of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean religious wisdom texts. Consequently, exegetes should pause before repeating the *sensus communis* of modern biblical scholarship that Qoheleth is written as a challenge to “traditional” wisdom literature or “orthodox” Israelite theology⁽⁵¹⁾. It seems more probable to me that the vision of Qoheleth as the lone, counter-cultural skeptic, swimming against the religious current of his day, is a post-Enlightenment anachronism based on an idea of individual autonomy foreign to the world of ancient Israel. It is more fruitful to set Qoheleth against the backdrop of the rivalry between humanity and the divine, common in the religious visions of Babylon, Greece, and Israel. Doing so clarifies Qoheleth’s advice that humankind give up its illusory desire to be like God.

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⁽⁵¹⁾ However, perhaps Whybray (“Qoheleth as Theologian”, 245) goes too far in the other direction when he sees *Qoheleth* “as a religious and theological work concerned to defend rather than attack the Jewish faith”.

SUMMARY

This article looks at the repeated gnomic phrase in the Book of Qoheleth, “All is vanity and a chasing after wind” (NRSV) and reads it as a disjunctive parallelism in which the terms *הבל* and *רוח* denote mortality and the divine spirit, respectively, thus showing the sense of the phrase to be, “All is mortal, but strives for immortality”. Using René Girard’s concept of mimetic rivalry clarifies this reading of the proverb, and shows it to be a concise expression of a major theme in the Book of Qoheleth, viz., the author’s thoughts on the difference between humanity and God, understood as paradoxical relationship based on both similarity and difference between humans and the divine. More importantly, Girard helps to understand more deeply how and why Qoheleth views human proximity with the divine as the cause of conflict and pain in human life. Because this tension is also evident in numerous other biblical and extra-biblical texts, caution must be exercised, in referring to the Book of Ecclesiastes as a “radical” or “heterodox” writing.

ANIMADVERSIONES

«De la brûlure d'un feu...» – Ben Sira 51,5a (hébreu)

Au dernier chapitre de son livre, Ben Sira rend grâce au Seigneur (Si 51,1-12). Dans sa prière, il fait l'anamnèse de son épreuve et du salut du Seigneur. Le texte hébreu en est bien transmis dans le manuscrit B⁽¹⁾, hormis quelques détails: le manuscrit est ici ou là déchiré, rendant la lecture d'un mot impossible ou conjecturale, ou le texte hébreu, même clair dans sa graphie, pose problème. C'est à l'élucidation d'une de ces énigmes que s'attache le présent article.

Dans les vv. 1c-5 (hébreu), Ben Sira rappelle à Dieu ce dont celui-ci l'a sauvé: concrètement, il s'agit de la calomnie (vv. 2cd.5cd) qui eût pu le mener à la mort (vv. 1c-2b; 3d; 6). Mais en multipliant les verbes différents pour exprimer la délivrance (six dans les vv. 1c-5, huit dans l'ensemble de la prière), Ben Sira démultiplie aussi l'objet de la délivrance (quatorze), celui-ci étant presque à chaque fois précédé de la préposition מן (treize emplois): le Seigneur l'a délivré de la mort, de la fosse, du shéol, de la calomnie, du piège, des adversités, de la flamme, de l'abîme...

C'est dans ce contexte qu'intervient le v. 5a, qui dépend grammaticalement du verbe הושתני, «tu m'as sauvé», du v. 4a. Voici les versets 4-5⁽²⁾:

(³) [.....] ומצוקות שלהב	מרבות צרות הושתני
(³) [..] ואם לאבן	מכבות אש לאין פחח

⁽¹⁾ Cf. *Facsimiles of the Fragments Hitherto Recovered of the Book of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew* (Oxford – Cambridge 1901).

⁽²⁾ D'après l'édition de *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (éd. P.C. BEENTJES) (VTS 68; Leiden – New York – Cologne 1997) 91. Pour l'édition du texte grec: *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (éd. J. ZIEGLER) (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum, vol. XII,2; Göttingen 1980) 363. Pour l'édition de la version syriaque: *La Sabiduría del Escriba. Wisdom of the Scribe*. Edición diplomática de la versión siríaca del libro de Ben Sira según el Códice Ambrosiano, con traducción española e inglesa. Diplomatic Edition of the Syriac Version of the Book of Ben Sira according to Codex Ambrosianus, with Translations in Spanish and English (éds N. CALDUCH-BENAGÉS – J. FERRER – J. LIESEN) (Biblioteca Midrásica 26; Estella (Navarra) 2003) 266.

⁽³⁾ Après שלהב[ה] manque un mot de quelques lettres dans le manuscrit, déchiré à cet endroit. La plupart des commentateurs suggèrent סביב, «tout autour», ou un mot de la racine qui ne soit pas plus long. À l'appui de cette thèse les versions grecque (κυκλόθεν) et syriaque («qui m'entourait») mais aussi Lm 2,3: «il a allumé en Jacob un feu flamboyant qui dévore tout autour [סביב]». Si שלהב est un état construit, on pourrait aussi proposer אש, «une flamme de feu»: la répétition au stique suivant de אש n'est pas un obstacle majeur à la proposition; la version syriaque a réalisé quasiment une synthèse des deux propositions: «de la flamme d'un feu qui m'entourait»; mais dans la Bible hébraïque, שלהב est toujours (3 occurrences) un état absolu.

⁽⁴⁾ Avec les commentateurs, on propose les consonnes הו en début de mot, soit הוהו, «abîme». «Du ventre du shéol» (מבטן שאול): Jon 2,3.

⁽⁵⁾ Le manuscrit propose trois lettres, לאב, avec un ב non final. Selon P.W. SKEHAN – A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; Garden City, NY 1987) 563, «the broken l'm- is an unsolved puzzle». Faut-il y voir לאב et comprendre «du sein de l'abîme, ma mère» (avec le ל d'un second génitif)? רחם et אב appartiennent au même champ sémantique et le

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4 De nombreuses adversités
tu m'as sauvé, | Et des tourments d'une
flamme [...], |
| 5 De la brûlure d'un feu qui
ne fut pas allumé, | Du sein de l'abîme [...]. |

L'analyse portera sur le v. 5a. Le verbe כבה signifie «s'éteindre» (qal) ou «éteindre» (piel). Il serait ici à l'infinitif construit: מִכְבוֹת au piel⁽⁶⁾. Le sens de מִכְבוֹת אֵשׁ, «de l'extinction d'un feu», n'est à ma connaissance accepté par personne, car il serait contradictoire: ce n'est pas de l'extinction d'un feu que Ben Sira demande d'être délivré mais évidemment du feu lui-même. D'autre part, les autres objets de délivrance sont exprimés par des substantifs, ce qui rend l'hypothèse d'un verbe improbable⁽⁷⁾. Dès lors, bien que le manuscrit présente clairement les cinq consonnes מִכְבוֹת le כ étant toutefois écrit comme en surimpression diverses modifications ont été proposées. Il convient cependant de se pencher d'abord sur l'hypothèse de P. Steininger qui garde le texte hébraïque tel quel mais en suggère une interprétation différente.

Selon Steininger⁽⁸⁾, il faudrait voir dans מִכְבוֹת la préposition מן suivie du substantif מִכְבָּה, au pluriel, qui signifierait «feu», «ardeur». Il s'agirait d'un substantif hébreu inédit, «ein neues hebräisches Wort», qui pourrait trouver appui dans la langue araméenne (כבב, «brûler») et acadienne (*kabâbu*, «brûler»). N. Peters reprend l'idée sans la discuter⁽⁹⁾, vocalise מִכְבוֹת et traduit «aus den Gluten des Feuers» ou «ex aestibus ignis»⁽¹⁰⁾. Avec R.

shéol est perçu comme entrailles maternelles par Job par exemple (Jb 2,21); mais si le shéol est désirable pour Job, il ne l'est pas pour Ben Sira: l'appellerait-il «ma mère»? On peut aussi penser à מִכְבָּה, «du sein de l'abîme de mon peuple» (cf. «la calomnie du peuple» au v. 2c hébreu, mais probablement une glose). Ou à un mot plus long, comme semble le permettre le manuscrit, tels que מִכְבָּה, «des peuples», ou מִכְבָּה, «selon ta fidélité», qui s'harmoniserait bien avec «ton amour» [חֶסֶדךָ] (v. 3b) et les miséricordes [רַחֲמִים] du Seigneur (v. 8a). Mais le contexte des vv. 4-5, qui énumère toutes les adversités rencontrées par Ben Sira, ne cadre pas bien avec cette dernière proposition. L'hypothèse de «l'abîme sans eaux» (לֹא מֵיִם) n'est pas convaincante, le מֵיִם étant précisément caractérisé comme un lieu empli d'eaux menaçantes. Je proposerai pour ma part מִכְבָּה. Le substantif מִכְבָּה (ou מִכְבָּה, «terreur», a comme pluriel מִכְבָּה ou מִכְבָּה. Il figure, en graphie pleine, en Si 40,5b (מִכְבָּה מוֹת). La graphie défective מִכְבָּה, attestée en Jb 20,25, pourrait apparaître en Si 51,5b. Ben Sira louerait le Seigneur de l'avoir délivré «du sein de l'abîme des terreurs», sens qui convient au contexte. À ce stade de l'enquête, il me semble que ce soit la meilleure hypothèse. C'est *grosso modo* le sens qui transparaît, sans explication, dans la traduction de O. MULDER, «Three Psalms or Two Prayers in Sirach 51? The End of Ben Sira's Book of Wisdom», *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature. Yearbook 2004. Prayer from Tobit to Qumran. Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, July 5-9 2003* (éds R. EGGER-WENZEL – J. CORLEY) (DCLY; Berlin – New York 2004) 176 («from the belly of the abyss [of horror]»). La version grecque n'a pas traduit le terme et a amplifié מִכְבָּה, en proposant «de la profondeur du ventre de l'Hadès» (βάθος κοιλιᾶς ἁδου). La version syriaque n'a pas traduit le stique.

⁽⁶⁾ Cf. vocalisation de מִכְבָּה בְּאֵלֶיךָ מוֹסֵד יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, *ספר בן סירא השלם*, 1953, p. 26 (et réimpression de 1997).

⁽⁷⁾ Exception: מִכְבָּה וּמִכְבָּה שֶׁקֶר: «[tu m'a sauvé] des lèvres de méchanceté et des plâtriers de mensonge» (v. 5c). Mais מִכְבָּה est un participe construit, donc à valeur substantivée. En outre, מִכְבָּה שֶׁקֶר est une citation de Jb 13,4. D'autre part, on ne peut exclure que מִכְבָּה soit un deuxième complément de מִכְבָּה שֶׁקֶר.

⁽⁸⁾ P. STEININGER, «Ein neues hebräisches Wort», ZAW 21 (1901) 143-144.

⁽⁹⁾ N. PETERS, *Der jüngst wiederaufgefundene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus* (Fribourg 1902) 302, 431.

⁽¹⁰⁾ N. PETERS, *Liber Iesu Filii Sirach sive Ecclesiasticus hebraice* (Fribourg 1905) 144-145.

Smend⁽¹¹⁾, ce sont à ma connaissance les seuls exégètes à avoir jamais accepté la proposition, que personne n'évoque d'ailleurs après eux, sauf Segal en 1953, et pour la rejeter: il la qualifie de «lointaine» (אבל זה רחוק)⁽¹²⁾. Les dictionnaires ne la reprennent pas, pas même comme hypothèse. D.J.A. Clines⁽¹³⁾ propose à titre de conjecture l'entrée [כָּבַה], mais au sens de «dimness», en rattachant le substantif au verbe כָּבַה «éteindre», en renvoyant à l'hypothèse de l'infinitif piel du verbe et en ne trouvant au supposé substantif aucune autre occurrence. Il n'y a pas lieu de réfuter l'existence des racines araméenne et acadienne submentionnées signifiant «brûler»⁽¹⁴⁾. Mais il n'y a pas lieu non plus de reconnaître en כָּבַה le substantif כָּבַה qui leur serait apparenté. D'abord, le mot n'est attesté nulle part en hébreu, dans aucun état de la langue. Ensuite, la racine כָּבַה, bien attestée quant à elle dans tous les états de la langue, signifie en hébreu non pas «brûler» mais «éteindre» (voir infra). Ben Sira ne l'ignore pas puisqu'en Si 3,30 (MA) il utilise le verbe: אֵשׁ לוֹהֶמֶת יִכְבּוּ מִים, «l'eau éteint le feu ardent». La racine כָּבַה (ou כָּבִי ou כָּבֵא) a également le sens d'«éteindre» en araméen. Bref, il ne convient pas de retenir l'hypothèse.

Diverses modifications ont été proposées. La première d'entre elles, celle de S. Schechter⁽¹⁵⁾, suggère מַלְבוֹת אֵשׁ, «des flammes d'un feu», d'après Ex 3,2 où le Seigneur apparaît à Moïse בְּלַבַּת אֵשׁ, «dans la flamme d'un feu». Mais le mot est un hapax dans la Bible hébraïque et pose lui-même problème⁽¹⁶⁾. En outre, la hampe du ל rend la confusion entre le ל et une autre lettre improbable. I. Lévi avait déjà rejeté l'hypothèse sans explication⁽¹⁷⁾.

Une deuxième proposition⁽¹⁸⁾, מִתּוֹךְ אֵשׁ, «du milieu d'un feu», s'inspire de la Septante – ἐκ μέσου πυρός. L'expression figure dans la Bible mais avec l'article: מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (Dt 4,12.15.33.36; Ez 1,4). Que le terme מִתּוֹךְ soit redondant par rapport à un supposé סָבִיב (κυκλόθεν) du stique précédent n'est pas un argument décisif. En revanche, d'autres objections sont plus sérieuses. Le terme מִתּוֹךְ n'a que quatre lettres au lieu de cinq et s'il conserve quatre lettres de מַכְבּוֹת, il le fait dans le désordre; la hampe du ך peut induire la confusion

⁽¹¹⁾ R. SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin 1906) 499, considère l'hypothèse plausible (mais envisage aussi favorablement celle de Schechter; voir note 15) et traduit en conséquence: «aus der Glut eines Feuers» (R. SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach. Hebräisch und Deutsch* [Berlin 1906] 92).

⁽¹²⁾ שְׁנֵד, 1953, p. 105, מִשָּׁה צָבִי סָגַל, סֵפֶר בֶּן סִירָא הַשֵּׁלֶם.

⁽¹³⁾ D.J.A. CLINES, *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield 1998) IV, 353.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Cf. M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* (Jérusalem 1903) 606; M. SOKOLOFF, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan – Baltimore – Londres 2002) 549; *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago – Glückstadt 1971) VIII, 2.

⁽¹⁵⁾ S. SCHECHTER – C. TAYLOR, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira. Portions of the Book Ecclesiasticus from Hebrew Manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah Collection* (Cambridge 1899) 66. M. Segal reprend aussi l'hypothèse, ajoute celle de מַלְבוֹת (même sens) sans trancher; c'est celle-ci qui figurait dans la première édition de son livre en 1933, p. 105.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Cf. W.H.C. PROPP, *Exodus 1–18* (AB 2; New York – Londres – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland 1998) 183–199.

⁽¹⁷⁾ I. LÉVI, *L'Écclesiastique ou la sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira. Texte original hébreu* (BEHE Sciences religieuses, 10,2; Paris 1901) II, 219.

⁽¹⁸⁾ SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 563; A.A. DI LELLA, "Sirach 51:1–12: Poetic Structure and Analysis of Ben Sira's Psalm", *CBQ* 48 (1986) 397, 402.

avec ך ou ך, mais difficilement avec ת et rend l'hypothèse de l'interversion des lettres ך et כ improbable. On peut donc considérer la proposition מתוך, née de la lecture de la Septante, comme une lecture «facilitante».

D'autres encore suggèrent de modifier מכבות en מבינות, «d'entre»⁽¹⁹⁾: le sens serait globalement le même que celui de la modification précédente⁽²⁰⁾. Lévi avance comme argument que מבינות est utilisé avec אש en Ez 10,2, mais à l'examen on se rend compte que les deux mots figurent dans l'ordre inverse, אש מבינות, et qu'ils appartiennent à des syntagmes différents: «remplis tes mains de charbons de feu au milieu des chérubins [מבינות לְכַרְבִּיִּם]». La préposition בינות suppose la pluralité, voire deux groupes distincts⁽²¹⁾, et les prépositions composées מבין et מבינות (seulement Ez 10,2.7 dans la Bible hébraïque) supposent aussi la pluralité.

Les propositions submentionnées réfutées, je suggère de modifier אש מבינות en מכות אש (מכות), «de la brûlure d'un feu». Les arguments en faveur de cette opération sont les suivants.

Premièrement, quatre consonnes sur cinq sont conservées (מ כ ו ת), dont trois à leur place (מ.ו.ת). Le כ a été écrit en surimpression, marquant peut-être une hésitation; figurant originellement en troisième position selon mon hypothèse, il passe en seconde position dans le manuscrit B.

Deuxièmement, la confusion entre כ et כ et entre כ et מ est très plausible. D'abord, les lettres כ et כ peuvent facilement se confondre à la lecture, et elles le sont à plusieurs reprises dans les manuscrits de Ben Sira⁽²²⁾. Les lettres כ et מ s'inscrivent à tout le moins dans un même espace graphique et dans les manuscrits hébreux du livre, selon I. Lévi, «parfois כ et מ paraissent s'être confondus»⁽²³⁾. Plusieurs exemples, y compris dans le manuscrit B, l'attestent. Ensuite, מכות, premier mot de la ligne, se situe exactement en dessous de מכות du verset précédent: le scribe aura recopié la finale כות, en lieu et place de כות. Enfin, le verbe כבה, associé à אש, est le verbe habituel dans la Bible pour dire «éteindre» (piel), «s'éteindre» (qal) (voir infra): le scribe l'aura repris, sans prendre garde au sens du passage.

Troisièmement, l'expression entière מכות אש, et non seulement le terme מכות, est attestée en Lv 13,24: [...] מכות־אש וְהָיָה מִחַיֵּת הַמִּכָּה בְּהָרֵת [...] לְבָנָה; «S'il y a sur sa peau la brûlure d'un feu et que la trace de la brûlure devient une tache blanche [...], le prêtre l'examinera». Bien que le terme מכות soit rare⁽²⁴⁾, il apparaît sans conteste deux fois dans le verset et le sens de

(19) LÉVI, *L'Ecclésiastique*, II, 219.

(20) M. GILBERT, "L'action de grâces de Ben Sira (Si 51,1-12)", *Ce Dieu qui vient* (éd. R. KUNZMANN) (LD 159; Paris 1995) 233, renvoie aux deux propositions.

(21) P. JOUON, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* (Rome 1965 [1923]) 282, §103n.

(22) Par exemple Si 44,22. C'est tellement vrai qu'un mot est parfois écrit avec les deux lettres écrites l'une au-dessus de l'autre, en marge ou même dans le texte: cf. Si 31,19.

(23) LÉVI, *L'Ecclésiastique*, II, 115. Pour le manuscrit B: par exemple Si 16,5b: מאלה (la préposition כ suivie du pronom אלה) pour מאלה (la préposition מן suivie de אלה), d'accord avec Lévi, Smend, Peters, Segal, Skehan-Di Lella; Si 51,11: ואזכרך («je me souviendrai de toi») pour ואזכרך («je te chanterai»), avec Smend, Segal, Skehan-Di Lella; la correction ne me semble pas s'imposer, à moins de vouloir suivre le grec. Voir aussi Si 7,4: ממלך (manuscrit A) ou כמלך (manuscrit C).

(24) Trois occurrences dans la Bible (avec Si 51,5); 3Q8, 1, 1.8 (*DJD* 3, 100: מכות), mais l'état du fragment ne permet pas d'apporter quelque lumière. La Mishna (*Nega'im* 9,1), commentant Lv 13,24, écrit bien מכות et comprend le terme comme une brûlure due au feu.

«brûlure» a été réaffirmé et justifié par Jacob Milgrom⁽²⁵⁾. מְכוּהָ dérive du verbe כוה, au niph'al «être brûlé» (Pr 6,28; Is 43,2; Jr 23,29 [?]), verbe utilisé également par Ben Sira (Si 43,4 [MB]): «et par sa lumière [du soleil] l'œil est brûlé»: עֵין [תְּכַהֵן] (וּמְנוּרָה תְּכוּהָ); un autre substantif en est dérivé, כְּוִיָּה, «brûlure» (Ex 21,25: 2x).

Enfin, le sens convient parfaitement: Ben Sira loue le Seigneur de l'avoir sauvé de la brûlure d'un feu – métaphorique évidemment. Le sens est proche de celui proposé par Steininger et repris par Peters, mais en suggérant le substantif מְכוּהָ au lieu de כְּבִיָּה, il me semble l'avoir fondé sur des bases plus sûres.

Le second syntagme du stique, לֹא־יִנְפַח, est énigmatique. פָּחַח, que l'on vocalisera פָּחַח (part. qal passif de פָּחַח)⁽²⁶⁾, signifie littéralement «pas soufflé». Faut-il entendre «souffler» au sens de «allumer» ou d'«éteindre»? La question se pose dans la mesure où les deux verbes נָפַח et פָּחַח peuvent tout aussi bien exprimer une dynamique de croissance (p. ex. Gn 2,7; Ez 37,9) qu'une dynamique de destruction (p. ex. Ez 21,36; Ag 1,9; Jb 11,26).

On préférera le premier sens pour plusieurs raisons. Tout d'abord, dans les 5 occurrences bibliques des verbes נָפַח et פָּחַח, avec אֵשׁ, le verbe signifie «allumer» le feu (Ez 22,20.21.36; Is 54,16; Jb 20,26).

Ensuite, l'expression équivalente avec le verbe נָפַח, אֵשׁ לֹא־נִפְחָה (Jb 20,26)⁽²⁷⁾, signifie «un feu qui ne fut pas allumé», pas allumé par l'homme: feu de la foudre (cf. Jb 1,16: אֵשׁ אֱלֹהִים נִפְלָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם), feu de la colère divine qui dévore (אֵשׁ) le méchant⁽²⁸⁾. La signification de l'expression est confirmée par sa reprise littérale dans le traité *Semahot*, 47b. Ce traité, consacré à la mort et aux funérailles, raconte l'histoire d'un rabbin condamné à mort par le feu. Il lui fait dire: «Il est préférable que je sois consumé par un feu qui est allumé plutôt que par un feu qui n'est pas allumé; car il est écrit: un feu non allumé va le consumer» (מוֹשֵׁב אֵשׁ שֶׁנּוֹפַחַה וְלֹא אֵשׁ שֶׁלֹּא נִפְחָה) (29). Ce feu non allumé désigne ici le feu de la géhenne. On notera que, se référant à l'Exode, le livre de la Sagesse stipule que «Ils n'entrevoient qu'un bûcher qui s'allumait de lui-même [αὐτομάτη πυρὰ], semant la peur» (Sg 17,6).

La différence entre les négations לֹא (Jb 20,26) et לֹא־יִנְפַח (Si 51,5a), dans ces contextes précis, n'est pas fondamentale, pas plus qu'entre יִנְפַח (ou יִנְפַח: Si 51,7) et לֹא־יִנְפַח. On sait que la négation לֹא apparaît plutôt dans les propositions verbales et יִנְפַח dans les propositions nominales. Mais il arrive que לֹא apparaisse en proposition nominale et commande un substantif (cf. Ex 4,10; Nb 23,19), un adjectif ou un participe et si יִנְפַח commande souvent un substantif («il n'y a pas de»), il peut aussi précéder un participe (Ex 5,16)⁽³⁰⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ J. MILGROM, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York – Londres – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland 1991) 789-790. Il mentionne aussi la racine acadienne *kavu* («cuire», «rôtir»).

⁽²⁶⁾ Cf. PETERS, *Der... hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus*, 302; GILBERT, «L'action de grâces de Ben Sira», 233.

⁽²⁷⁾ נִפְחָה: parfait pual 3^e pers. sing. masc.; , à l'*atnah*.

⁽²⁸⁾ Cf. 2R 1,10.12.14: תָּרַד אֵשׁ [אֱלֹהִים] מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִאֲכַל אֶת הַיָּם וְהָאֲדָמָה...». Cf. M.H. POPE, *Job* (AB 15; New York – Londres 1973) 153; N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job*. A Commentary (OTL; Londres 1985) 319.

⁽²⁹⁾ *The minor Tractates of the Talmud. Massektoth Ketannoth* (éd. A. COHEN) (Londres 1965) I, 368. Le traité met le verbe au féminin mais, bien que plus fréquemment féminin dans la Bible hébraïque, אֵשׁ peut être aussi bien masculin que féminin.

⁽³⁰⁾ Cf. JOÜON, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, 488-492, §160; J. CARMIGNAC, «L'emploi de la négation יִנְפַח dans la Bible et à Qumrân», *RevQ* 8/31 (1974) 407.

Dans וְאִין, le ו est souvent adversatif, séparant deux syntagmes (Si 51,7: «je me suis tourné de toute part, mais personne qui m'aide»: וְאִין עוֹדֵר לִי), mais il ne l'est pas toujours: ainsi en Jb 5,9: גְּדֻלוֹת וְאִין חֶקֶר, «de grandes choses qu'on ne peut sonder». Tout au plus pourrait-on suggérer que, avec le ל de direction ou de but, וְאִין exprime, davantage que אִין, une incapacité, un «ne pas pouvoir», donc une modalité⁽³¹⁾. Ainsi, לְאִין מִסְפֵּר, «sans nombre», signifie «qu'on ne peut compter» (1 Ch 22,4), לְאִין מִשָּׂא, «qu'on ne peut porter» (2 Ch 20,25), לְאִין מְרַפָּא, une maladie «sans guérison», «qu'on ne peut guérir» (2 Ch 21,18; 36,16). Aussi pourrait-on traduire אִשׁ לְאִין פָּחָה: «un feu qui n'a pas pu être allumé, qui ne peut pas être allumé, qu'il n'est pas possible d'allumer, sans qu'il puisse être allumé». Mais cette nuance modale n'est pas absolue. Ainsi, si לְאִין מִסְפֵּר signifie «sans nombre», «qu'on ne peut compter» (1 Ch 22,4), le même sens est exprimé par אִין מִסְפֵּר par אִין (Ex 21,11) et par עֲדֵאִין מִסְפֵּר (Jb 5,9); ou encore, en Ne 8,10, לְאִין נִכֹּן peut signifier tout aussi bien «[faites porter sa part] à qui n'a rien de prêt» (BJ 1999) ou «à qui n'a rien pu préparer» (TOB). Notons que les usages bibliques (8) de לְאִין apparaissent dans l'hébreu biblique récent et qu'ils sont attestés en nombre à Qumrân (une quarantaine d'occurrences). Bref, il n'est pas nécessaire de modifier לְאִין en לְאִין ou en לֹא. Il ne s'impose pas davantage de modifier פָּחָה en נִפְחָה: les deux verbes, פָּחָה et נִפְחָה, signifient bien «souffler» et s'utilisent avec אִשׁ au sens d'«allumer» (cf. supra). Certes, avec לֹא נִפְחָה, la citation de Jb 20,26 serait alors presque littérale⁽³²⁾, mettant simplement le verbe au féminin, comme le fait le traité *Semaḥot* 47b, mais la citation peut tout aussi bien être libre.

On préférera pour פָּחָה le sens de «allumer» pour une troisième raison. Alors que «allumer un feu», au sens physique ou au sens figuré (le feu de la colère divine le plus souvent), peut se dire avec plusieurs verbes différents⁽³³⁾, «éteindre un feu» se dit habituellement dans la Bible hébraïque avec le verbe כָּבַה (24 occurrences). Le verbe se conjugue au qal (קָבַה) pour signifier que le feu s'éteint et au piel (פָּקַה) pour signifier «éteindre» le feu⁽³⁴⁾. On s'attendrait donc à ce que Ben Sira, s'il avait voulu dire «éteindre», utilisât le verbe כָּבַה, d'autant plus qu'il y recourt en Si 3,30 («l'eau éteint le feu ardent»; cf. supra).

Quatrièmement, et de manière plus décisive, on relèvera deux expressions consacrées dans la Bible⁽³⁵⁾: לֹא תִכְבֶּה (אִשׁ), «un feu qui ne s'éteind(ra) pas», qu'il s'agisse du feu naturel (Is 66,24), du feu sur l'autel (Lv 6,6), de la colère divine (2 R 22,17; 2 Ch 34,25; Jr 7,20), du feu qui dévorera Jérusalem (Jr 17,27); וְאִין מְכַבֶּה, «et personne pour éteindre» le feu, recouvre une

⁽³¹⁾ Cf. D.J.A. CLINES, *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (1993) I, 217.

⁽³²⁾ Modifiant en לֹא נִפְחָה: מִשָּׂא צְבִי סָגַל, סִפְרֵי בֵן סִירָא הַשְּׁלֵם, 1933, p. פה; SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, 499. Modifiant en נִפְחָה: SCHECHTER – TAYLOR, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 66. Évoquent l'hypothèse de לְאִין פָּחָה («sans charbon»): LÉVI, *L'Ecclésiastique*, II, 19; מִשָּׂא צְבִי סָגַל, סִפְרֵי בֵן סִירָא הַשְּׁלֵם, 1953, p. שגד. SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 563 et DI LELLA, «Sirach 51:1-12», 402, proposent la vocalisation *pōhāh* tout en l'estimant douteuse, sans autre précision (l'infinitif construit suivi du suffixe 3^e pers. sing. serait נִפְחָה: le souffler du feu; מִפָּח est le substantif [cf. Jb 11,20; Si 30,12]).

⁽³³⁾ בעֵר אִשׁ (hiphil): Lm 4,11; Ez 21,3; Jr 11,16; 43,12; 49,27; 50,32; Am 1,14. אִשׁ (piel): Ex 35,3; Ez 21,4; Lm 2,3; Nb 11,3; Ps 106,18; Jr 2,3. אִשׁ (qal): Dt 32,22; Is 50,11; Jr 17,4. אִשׁ (piel): Ez 24,10. אִשׁ, מִן אִשׁ, וְאִין אִשׁ, et autres verbes signifiant «allumer» ou «brûler» comme וְאִין אִשׁ ou וְאִין אִשׁ.

⁽³⁴⁾ Notons toutefois l'emploi exclusif du verbe דָּעַךְ dans le livre de Job et les Psaumes.

⁽³⁵⁾ Cf. A. BAUMANN, «קָבַה», *TDOT* VII, 38-39.

semblable amplitude sémantique (Is 1,31; Jr 4,4; 21,12; Am 5,6). On constate donc une constance pour dire «éteindre» le feu et en particulier pour dire «un feu qui ne s'éteint pas» ou «un feu qu'on ne peut éteindre». Si donc Ben Sira visait «un feu qui ne s'éteint pas» ou un sens analogue, on s'attendrait à ce qu'il recourût à une de ces deux expressions consacrées, ou à tout le moins au verbe כבה⁽³⁶⁾. J'ajouterais que cet usage récurrent du verbe כבה associé à אש permet aussi de mieux comprendre l'erreur du scribe recopiant son manuscrit et écrivant אש מכבה pour אש, en début de verset.

Enfin, la version grecque a bien compris «allumer» puisqu'elle traduit פה par le verbe ἔκαίω.

Si l'expression signifie donc bien «un feu qui ne fut pas allumé», «un feu qu'on ne peut allumer», quel en est le sens?

Le feu est un élément que Ben Sira mentionne fréquemment dans son livre, 27 fois en grec (πῦρ), 17 fois dans les manuscrits hébreux (אש), sans compter les mots relevant du même champ sémantique. Il mentionne le feu allumé et entretenu par l'homme, tel celui du forgeron (Si 38,28; v. manquant en hébreu). Il connaît le feu que l'homme moderne tient pour un phénomène naturel et que lui-même considère comme créé par Dieu (Si 39,29). Il le compte parmi les choses nécessaires à l'homme, entre éléments naturels et produits humains, aux côtés de l'eau, du sel, de la graisse de froment, du lait, du miel, du sang de la vigne, de l'huile et du vêtement (Si 39,26). Il sait que le feu brûle suivant son combustible (Si 28,10; v. manquant en hébreu) mais qu'une étincelle peut allumer un grand brasier (Si 11,32; v. manquant en hébreu). Il associe aussi le feu aux phénomènes prophétiques extraordinaires (Élie: Si 48,1.3.9). La plupart du temps, il évoque le feu dans un contexte métaphorique: feu qui brûle le méchant (Si 8,10; 11,32), feu de la passion (Si 9,8; 23,17), du châtiment (Si 21,9; 36,8; 39,29; 45,19). Ces métaphores s'appuient sur le feu réel, tel que Ben Sira le percevait: menace, danger, disproportion entre la cause et les effets, caractère immaîtrisable, dévorant, inextinguible. On peut se demander si l'expression «un feu qui ne fut pas allumé» n'est pas une formulation superlative de ce qui est exprimé ailleurs et autrement dans le livre.

Des expressions littéralement proches de Si 51,5a (Jb 20,26 et *Semaḥot* 47b) ou analogues quant à l'idée (Sg 17,6), vues précédemment, pourraient orienter en ce sens. Elles supposent que le feu n'a pas été allumé *par un homme* et en suggèrent le caractère terrible et immaîtrisable. En Jb 20,26, l'expression sous-entend que le feu est allumé par Dieu, le feu terrible étant celui de la colère divine frappant le méchant telle la foudre. Dans le traité *Semaḥot* 47b, le feu est celui de la géhenne; pour exprimer le caractère terrible du feu de la géhenne, plus terrible que le feu matériel qui va bientôt

⁽³⁶⁾ En Si 28,21-23, la calomnie est aussi comparée à une flamme:

«Une mort terrible, la mort qu'elle inflige,	Et le sheol lui est préférable.
Elle n'a pas d'emprise sur les pieux,	Ils ne sont pas brûlés à sa flamme.
Ceux qui abandonnent le Seigneur	En eux elle brûlera sans s'éteindre».
sont ses victimes,	

Le texte hébreu n'étant pas conservé, on ne peut déterminer avec certitude le verbe utilisé pour dire «s'éteindre»; syriaque: verbe *d'k*, soit le verbe habituel en syriaque dans l'expression «[le feu] ne s'éteint pas». Voir aussi Si 23,17, pour lequel le texte hébreu n'est pas non plus conservé.

consumer le rabbin sur le bûcher, le texte note précisément qu'«il est préférable d'être consumé par un feu qui est allumé [par l'homme] que par un feu qui n'est pas allumé [par l'homme]». En Sg 17,6, le feu sème la peur précisément parce qu'il s'allume de lui-même dans la ténèbre, sans agent et sans cause⁽³⁷⁾.

En Si 51,5a et à la différence de Jb 20,26, la connotation de l'origine divine du feu est exclue car elle serait contradictoire: Ben Sira louerait le Seigneur de l'avoir délivré d'un feu qu'Il aurait lui-même allumé, alors que jamais il ne l'accuse. Ben Sira n'est pas Job. Dès lors, il faudrait voir en Si 51,5 un *feu non allumé par un homme*, voire spontané, et en ce sens un *feu terrible, redoutable, immaîtrisable*. Face à un phénomène dont l'homme n'est pas l'agent ou dont l'origine et la cause sont inconnues, la peur surgit, car le phénomène semble échapper à toute maîtrise. Le feu est par lui-même un phénomène redoutable, imprévisible, comme l'a évoqué à plusieurs reprises le livre de Ben Sira. A fortiori si son origine n'est pas humaine ni connue. C'est l'expérience que rapportent les expressions du traité *Šemaḥot* et de Sg 17,6. N'est-ce pas là ce que Ben Sira veut dire? En disant «tu m'as sauvé de la brûlure d'un feu qui ne fut pas allumé», il rend grâce au Seigneur de l'avoir délivré d'un feu redoutable, immaîtrisable, terrible, effrayant.

S'il en est bien ainsi, le sens de l'expression serait alors sensiblement le même que celui de l'expression «un feu qui ne s'éteint pas», «un feu qu'on ne peut éteindre». Mais le sens d'une métaphore ne s'identifie pas à la référence à partir de laquelle elle s'est construite. Et les références à partir desquelles les deux métaphores ont été imaginées sont, elles, divergentes: référence au début du feu («allumer») ou à sa fin («éteindre»).

Retournant à la totalité de la prière de Ben Sira (Si 51,1-12), est-il possible de préciser le sens de la métaphore? Le sens des métaphores, surtout quand elles sont habituelles ou traditionnelles, sont souvent éloignées de leur contexte d'émergence, aussi restera-t-on prudent: en usant de la métaphore «la racine du mal», par exemple, plus personne ne songe à la carotte plongée en terre. On ne peut déterminer si l'expression *אש לאין פחם*, dans le livre de Ben Sira, est déjà passée dans le langage proverbial ou a encore le statut de métaphore vive, selon la terminologie de Ricœur. L'épreuve dont Ben Sira remercie le Seigneur de l'avoir délivré est avant tout la calomnie (vv. 2cd.5cd), qui vire à la persécution mortelle. La calomnie brûle tel «un feu qui ne fut pas allumé». Ben Sira veut-il dire que la calomnie n'avait pas d'origine humaine? Qu'il ignore ceux qui ont mis le feu aux poudres, les agents du mal? Que la calomnie était sans fondement, qu'elle est partie de rien? C'est probablement trop presser l'expression. Mieux vaut ne pas se focaliser sur la référence à partir de laquelle s'est un jour formée la métaphore, dont le livre de Job est le premier témoin, et voir le sens visé: une calomnie terrible, effrayante, immaîtrisable et même mortelle. En Si 28,21-23, malheureusement pas conservé en hébreu, Ben Sira disait déjà que la calomnie brûlait les méchants sans s'éteindre et les menait à la mort mais qu'elle n'avait pas

⁽³⁷⁾ Cf. C. LARCHER, *Le livre de la Sagesse ou la Sagesse de Salomon* (EB 5; Paris 1985) 955-956; L. MAZZINGHI, *Notte di paura e di luce*. Eseggesi di Sap 17,1-18,4 (AnBib 134; Rome 1995) 30.

d'emprise sur les pieux, lesquels n'étaient pas brûlés à sa flamme⁽³⁸⁾. En 51,1-12, il s'applique à lui-même le dit de sagesse: il a fait l'expérience de sa vérité. Face à ce mal effroyable, la délivrance n'est que plus éclatante et la louange justifiée. Celle-ci devient une confession de foi: seul le Dieu créateur du feu (Si 39,29) pouvait maîtriser l'immaitrisable.

Le sens du stique et de l'expression *אש לאין פחה* s'avère donc éloigné de celui proposé par A. Di Lella⁽³⁹⁾ qui pensait à un feu qui ne laisserait pas d'odeur («whiff», «smell», pour la racine *פחח*), comme en Dn 3,27 mais avec un autre vocabulaire; il manque ainsi la référence à Jb 20,26. À suivre Di Lella, Ben Sira interromprait alors l'évocation saisissante de sa descente aux enfers en décrivant comment, comme par miracle, le Seigneur l'aurait à ce point protégé du feu qu'il n'en gardait pas même l'odeur. Mais en fait il n'interrompt pas cette évocation, il est encore tout à la description des tourments, flamme, feu, abîme: «un feu d'enfer».

On notera que le texte grec n'a pas compris le sens de l'expression. Alors que le texte hébreu souligne le caractère redoutable, terrible et immaitrisable du feu («un feu qui ne fut pas allumé»), le texte grec souligne la non-responsabilité de Ben Sira dans le mal qui l'afflige ([...πυρός] οὐ οὐκ ἐξέκαυσσά: «...un feu que je n'ai pas allumé»). La version syriaque, pour sa part, n'a pas traduit le stique.

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SOMMAIRE

Le texte hébreu de Si 51,5a (*מכבות אש לאין פחה*) pose problème. Non que l'état du manuscrit soit altéré ou les lettres illisibles. Mais le sens échappe. De ce problème, les versions grecque et syriaque sont témoins. Cet article, après avoir examiné les différentes suggestions, propose de modifier *מכבות*, inintelligible en ce contexte, en *מכחה* (cf. Lv 13,24). En gardant le texte consonantique *פחה*, on s'interroge sur le sens énigmatique de ce «feu qui ne fut pas allumé». En s'appuyant sur des expressions similaires en Jb 20,26, *Šemaḥot* 47b et Sg 17,6, on aboutit au sens suivant: Ben Sira fut sauvé de la brûlure d'un feu terrible.

⁽³⁸⁾ Cf. note 36.

⁽³⁹⁾ SKEHAN – DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 563; DI LELLA, "Sirach 51:1-12", 402. Cf. note 32.

RECENSIONES

Vetus Testamentum

Samuel TERRIEN, *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (The Eerdmans Critical Commentary Series). Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. xix-971 p. 16 × 24. \$95.00 – £ 65.00

Cet ouvrage est le premier commentaire d'un livre de l'Ancien Testament à paraître dans la jeune collection *Eerdmans Critical Commentary*. Il paraît un an après le décès de l'A., professeur émérite de l'*Union Theological Seminary* de New York (1911-2002). Il veut s'adresser à la fois aux exégètes de métier et aux non-spécialistes, et prend en compte les points de vue juif et chrétien (tant catholique que réformé). La présentation matérielle en est soignée (malgré d'assez nombreuses coquilles dans les références bibliographiques) et aérée. Le contenu est par contre assez inégal.

L'Introduction rencontre, en une soixantaine de pages, les questions classiques de l'exégèse du Psautier: arrière-fond proche-oriental, origine des psaumes, formation du recueil, texte hébreu et versions, exécution musicale des poèmes, structure strophique, genres littéraires, théologie et lecture chrétienne. Les pages sur la structure strophique exposent la méthode d'analyse de l'A., somme toute assez classique (36-41). Les pages qui décrivent l'univers musical des psaumes, notamment à partir de leurs titres, sont les plus originales de cette Introduction, mais aussi les plus conjecturales, car le dossier est mal documenté (26-36); celles qui sont consacrées à la théologie du Psautier sont les plus denses (44-62): l'A. bâtit sur ses travaux antérieurs, notamment *The Elusive Presence* (San Francisco – New York 1983). Les états de la question mettent bien en relief les déplacements dans l'histoire de la recherche à la fin du 20^e siècle, en particulier l'intérêt pour la structure des psaumes (36-41) et pour "l'approche canonique" (21-24), sur laquelle l'A. se montre assez réservé. Dans l'ensemble, l'A. maîtrise la bibliographie de son sujet et en fournit une synthèse pondérée. Toutefois, on ne peut plus écrire aujourd'hui que "in any case, the psalms were first conceived and transmitted orally" (15), sans mentionner les auteurs qui pensent que certaines pièces ont été composées tout exprès pour les besoins de la constitution du recueil (cf. M. Millard, "Von der Psalmenexegese zur Psalterexegese", *Biblical Interpretation* 4 [1996] 311-328, spéc. 325-327; J.-M. Auwers, *La composition littéraire du Psautier* [CRB 46; Paris 2000] 175-176 et n. 553).

Le commentaire de chaque psaume suit un schéma fixe: une traduction (sur frais nouveaux), une sélection bibliographique, une section sur la

structure du poème (*Form*), un commentaire de chaque “strophe”, et une note conclusive sur la date et la théologie du psaume. Les principaux problèmes de critique textuelle sont brièvement évoqués à l’intérieur même du commentaire; si les sélections bibliographiques sont en général généreuses, les bilans de la recherche sont à peine esquissés. Comme l’indique son sous-titre, cet ouvrage est particulièrement attentif à la structure des pièces du Psautier, que la mise en page de la traduction elle-même permet de visualiser et que la section *Form* s’emploie à justifier brièvement. L’A. a mis à profit les travaux sur le sujet, mais il sait s’en démarquer et, en tout cas, ses analyses s’éloignent délibérément de la technicité d’un P. Auffret ou d’un M. Girard (de ce dernier, S. T. ne connaît que *Les Psaumes. Analyse structurelle et interprétation*, 1–50 [Montréal – Paris 1984]; depuis lors M. Girard a publié *Les psaumes redécouverts. De la structure au sens*, 3 vol. [Montréal 1994–1996]: cet ouvrage est le premier commentaire intégral du Psautier selon la méthode structurelle). L’A. ne s’intéresse pas à la structuration de groupes de psaumes, comme le recueil des Montées (Pss 120–134). Le commentaire proprement dit est tantôt développé — par exemple pour le Ps 2 (80–87) ou le Ps 73 (527–534) —, tantôt superficiel — ainsi pour le Ps 144 (898–901) et plus encore pour le Ps 110, pourtant si énigmatique (751–754: quatre pages de commentaire pour deux pages de références bibliographiques!).

Voici, à titre d’exemple, comment le Ps 72 est traité. La traduction est bien balancée, mais ne cherche pas la précision: au v. 5, *וְיָאֵר עַם-שֶׁמֶשׁ* ne peut pas signifier “as long as the sun shines”; au v. 7, pourquoi traduire *רֵב שְׁלוֹמִי* par “peace and prosperity”?; au v. 15, la traduction “May he receive” est une correction d’après la LXX, ce qui n’est pas signalé; la traduction du v. 16 (“May fields of wheat grow from the mountains, and plenty of fruit on Lebanon! And in the cities, may people blossom forth like the grass of the earth!”) est hautement conjecturale; au v. 18, pourquoi traduire *נִפְלְאוֹת* par “wonders and miracles”? D’un bout à l’autre du poème, les formes inaccomplies (*yiqtol*) sont interprétées tantôt comme des souhaits, tantôt comme des promesses, en fonction d’une répartition strophique hypothétique. — L’A. divise le Ps 72 en sept strophes composées chacune de trois distiques ou tristiques, soit vv. 1–3 (I), 4–5 (II), 7–9 (III), 10–11 (IV), 12–14 (V), 15–16 (VI), 17–18 (VII); le v. 19 est laissé hors de la structuration, comme doxologie éditoriale. Cette division a le mérite de l’originalité (à en juger à partir de l’inventaire dressé par P. van der Lugt, *Strofische Structuren in de Bijbels-Hebreeuwse Poëzie*, Kampen 1980, 311, à compléter par P. Auffret, “‘Toutes les nations le diront bienheureux’. Étude structurelle du Psaume 72”, *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 13 [1996] 41–58). Malheureusement, l’A. ne prend pas la peine de montrer comment ces strophes s’articulent entre elles. En fait, il est beaucoup plus naturel de regrouper les distiques par paires en douze quatrains, allant deux par deux pour le sens. On obtient ainsi six strophes en parallélisme alterné: aux vv. 1–4 répondent les vv. 12–14 (ces strophes décrivent la dimension sociale du règne), aux vv. 5–8 répondent les vv. 15–17 (ces strophes concernent l’étendue et la durée de ce règne), les vv. 9–11 formant le centre de la composition (voir J. Trublet et J.-N. Aletti, *Approche poétique et théologique des psaumes*, Paris 1983, 81, développé par Auffret, “‘Toutes les nations’”, qui intègre brillamment dans la structure la doxologie

finale). — Le commentaire est assez banal; l'A. note que la rubrique לשלמה (v. 1) est inhabituelle (voir cependant Ps 127,1), sans montrer comment cette notice peut être une clef (parmi d'autres) pour la lecture du poème (voir J.-M. Auwers, "Les Psaumes 70-72. Essai de lecture canonique", *RB* 101 [1994] 242-257). L'unité littéraire est admise comme allant de soi, alors que de bons auteurs la nient (voir en particulier E. Zenger, "'So betete David für seinen Sohn Salomo und für den König Messias'. Überlegungen zur holistischen und kanonischen Lektüre des 72. Psalms", *JhBTh* 8 [1993], p. 57-72). Concernant la datation, l'A. pense que le Ps 72 peut avoir été composé "at various times during the Davidic monarchy" (522), sans signaler que plusieurs auteurs situent le psaume après l'exil, du moins dans sa rédaction finale (cf. R.J. Tournay, *Voire et entendre Dieu avec les Psaumes ou la liturgie prophétique du Second Temple à Jérusalem* [CRB 24; Paris 1988] 177-178).

Il y a bien sûr quelques positions originales, qui retiennent l'attention: l'A. conclut à l'unité d'auteur du Ps 19, en raison de la régularité de la structure strophique (214). La proposition n'est pas tout à fait originale (voir M. Girard, *Les psaumes redécouverts*, vol. 1, 385-386), mais mérite d'être discutée, même s'il est plus probable que les vv. 8-15 ont été composés sur le canevas des vv. 2-7, pour compléter le poème primitif et en corriger la théologie (cf. J. A. Durlleser, "A Rhetorical Critical Study of Psalms 19, 42, and 43", *Studia biblica et theologica* 10 [1981] 179-197, spéc. 186).

Au total, on a l'impression désagréable que ce commentaire, sans doute longuement mûri, a été achevé dans une certaine précipitation: l'A. donne deux commentaires successifs de la première strophe du Ps 114, dont l'un était visiblement destiné à remplacer l'autre (768-769). Beaucoup de questions sont laissées en suspens. Surtout, l'A. ne connaît pas le commentaire de Fr.-L. Hossfeld et E. Zenger, *Psalms 1-50; Psalm 51-100* (NEB 29-40; Würzburg 1993 et 2002) et *Psalms 51-100* (HThKAT; Freiburg im Breisgau 2000), qui est aujourd'hui une référence obligée dans les études psalmiques (voir mes recensions dans *RTL* 28 [1997] 80-84; 32 [2001] 380-381).

Le but de l'A. n'est pas de signaler les incertitudes qui pèsent sur la transmission ou l'interprétation des psaumes, mais d'en permettre une lecture profitable. Certains lecteurs y trouveront certainement leur compte. Le spécialiste restera en général sur sa faim, malgré quelques pages vraiment suggestives (179-180 sur Ps 16,11).

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Marie MAUSSION, *Le mal, le bien et le jugement de Dieu dans le livre de Qohélet*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 190. Éditions Universitaires, Fribourg Suisse – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2003, VIII-199 p.

Cette édition remaniée d'une thèse de doctorat présentée en mars 2002 à l'Université Marc-Bloch de Strasbourg est bienvenue. Elle ne manque ni d'intérêt ni d'originalité. Le thème du jugement de Dieu, qui apparaît dans le titre du livre, attire immédiatement l'attention, car on sait qu'il est une des énigmes du livre de Qohélet. On a trop parlé de relectures bien pensantes à ce sujet. La tendance actuelle est d'attribuer à Qohélet ces versets jadis considérés comme des ajouts. Mais encore faut-il montrer leur cohérence dans l'œuvre et surtout dans la pensée du sage. C'est à quoi s'attache l'auteure de cette étude approfondie (151-173). Si jugement divin il y a ou il y aura, il doit porter sur le bien et sur le mal en l'homme. De là les deux premières approches de ce travail, le mal (11-70) et le bien (71-150) selon Qohélet. À propos du mal, le vocabulaire le désignant est analysé dans ses différentes acceptions chez Qohélet, tandis qu'à propos du bien, après une «approche sémantique du vocabulaire du bonheur chez Qohélet» (71-122), une place de choix est réservée (122-150) aux «7 refrains sur le bonheur: approches contextuelle et thématique» (sous-titre, 122). Un chapitre conclusif (174-182) considère la «démarche existentielle» de Qohélet, et l'auteure propose ses conclusions sur les mots יְהוָה et הַבַּל tels que les emploie Qohélet.

L'introduction (1-10) permet de situer l'exégèse actuelle de Qohélet en confrontation avec celle de nos prédécesseurs. L'auteure opte, «avec la quasi-totalité des auteurs actuels» (4), pour l'unité rédactionnelle du livre, à l'exception de son titre et de l'épilogue (Qo 1,1 et 12,9-14). Elle accepte également la thèse des citations implicites tenue par R. Gordis et R.N. Whybray, pourtant récusée par d'autres exégètes contemporains. Enfin, son étude étant thématique, elle regroupe en catégories simples les passages où Qohélet, tout au long de son livre, aborde tel ou tel thème, le mal, le bien, le jugement de Dieu, et, ce faisant, elle affirme pouvoir «dégager clairement la progression de la pensée de Qohélet, tout en se calquant sur sa propre démarche» (5). Aura-t-elle réussi? Au lecteur d'en juger.

Le premier chapitre tente de dégager le sens du mal pour Qohélet. L'étude porte tout d'abord sur Qo 1,12-15. Comme elle le fera tout au long de son travail, l'auteure donne le texte hébreu, le traduit très littéralement et fournit d'amples notes critiques sur sa traduction. Le point principal de ce passage de Qohélet est le v. 13. L'auteure opte pour l'interprétation proposée par N. Lohfink (cf. surtout «Kohélet übersetzen. Berichte aus einer Übersetzerwerkstatt», dans ses *Studien zu Kohélet* [SBA 26; Stuttgart 1998] 284-290; cf. encore récemment son *Qohélet. A Continental Commentary*, translated by S. McEvenue [Minneapolis 2003] 43). Selon lui, la préposition ׀ qui, certes, peut signifier «en ce qui concerne», ouvrirait ici une question indirecte: «to explore... whether all that is carried out under the heavens is really a bad business...». M.M. adopte cette interprétation: «[en me demandant] si tout ce qui se fait sous les cieux / ceci [est] une mau-

vaïse occupation...» (12). Comme le signale M.M. (19), cette lecture est aussi celle de L. Schweinhorst-Schönberger. Connue pourtant depuis plus de vingt ans, cette interprétation de Qo 1,13 n'a pas rencontré une acceptation unanime, loin de là. C'est aussi le וְעַיִן רָע initial de la phrase suivante qui fait problème et donc le sens de וְעַיִן רָע . Ou bien il s'agit, comme le pensent Lohfink et l'auteure, de tout ce qui se fait sous les cieux, ou bien, selon la lecture la plus courante, de la recherche menée par Qohélet. Le sens change du tout au tout selon l'interprétation qu'on adopte. L'interprétation la plus répandue «ne nous paraît pas se vérifier *d'emblée*», écrit l'auteure (19), qui ajoute: «Et si Qohélet se pose la question de savoir si toute activité est un וְעַיִן רָע [page 19 avant-dernière ligne, à corriger, comme me l'a confirmé l'auteure], c'est qu'il ne porte pas *a priori* un jugement entièrement négatif sur l'activité humaine». Elle conclut: «Il semble donc essentiel de lire Qo 1,13 comme une question, et non comme une affirmation sans appel, puisque toute la compréhension de la théologie de Qohélet en découle» (20). La suite du même paragraphe est révélatrice d'une option générale de lecture de Qo selon laquelle le sage ne ferait pas preuve d'un certain pessimisme. Car, pour M.M., refuser l'interprétation qu'elle propose de 1,13 conduit «à supposer chez Qohélet une vision très négative d'un Dieu lointain et capricieux, responsable du mal, et, *a fortiori*, incompréhensible» (20). Même si certains auteurs, cités dans la note 74, vont jusque là, d'autres pourront sans doute crier à la caricature. De même considérer que les nombreuses invitations de Qo à jouir des dons de Dieu contrediraient la vision de Dieu de ceux auxquels M.M. vient de faire allusion. Une telle argumentation convainc-elle? Prouve-t-on la validité d'une lecture particulière d'un texte par les excès de certains parmi ceux qui optent pour une autre, plus commune et moins recherchée?

Quoi qu'il en soit, l'analyse de la conception du mal dans l'œuvre de Qohélet est poursuivie avec clarté et elle conduit à quelques conclusions importantes: le mal est bien présent au monde, mais il n'est ni le fait de Dieu ni une «puissance» autonome; souvent le mal est attribuable à l'homme, mais il est des cas où le mal frappe de façon incompréhensible pour l'homme qui ignore le plan de Dieu: c'est alors cette condition humaine qui blesse le sage. L'homme ne connaît-il jamais le bien? Le chapitre suivant est ainsi amorcé.

À propos de Qo 9,3, l'auteure avance une interprétation dont je doute de la validité. Elle traduit: «Ceci [est] un *mal dans tout ce qui se fait* sous le soleil / [qu'il y ait] un sort identique pour tous; / aussi le cœur des fils de l'homme s'emplit-il de *mal* / et la sottise [est] dans leur cœur durant leur vie» (38). Au début de 9,3b, וְכֵן est rendu par «aussi» pris dans le sens d'une conséquence: le même destin, la mort, «incite les hommes à commettre davantage le mal» (39). M.M. tient à cette lecture, puisqu'elle parle encore d'une conséquence directe de la mort commune, à savoir «le désir de faire le mal» (40); l'aspect aveugle de la mort «invite l'homme à commettre le mal» (41); curieusement il s'agirait de «commission d'injustice» (44), pour dire, je suppose, «le fait de commettre l'injustice». E. Po-dechard (*L'Ecclésiaste*, [Ebib; Paris 1912] 411), il est vrai, suggérerait nettement une telle interprétation et la *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*, A.T. (Paris 1975) 1629 est on ne peut plus clair dans ce sens. Toutefois

n'est-ce pas excessif? On aurait aimé une discussion avec J.Y. Pahk, *Il canto della gioia in Dio*. L'itinerario sapienziale espresso dall'unità letteraria in Qohelet 8,16-9,10 e il parallelo di Gilgamesh Me. iii (Dipartimento di studi asiatici. Series Minor LII; Napoli 1996) 165-167. Le sens de נֹחַם en Qo 9,3b me paraît être plus simplement: «et puis», «en outre».

Le chapitre consacré à l'étude du bien chez Qohélet comporte tout d'abord, on l'a dit, une «approche sémantique du vocabulaire de bonheur» (71-122). On y trouve une étude sur l'emploi de נֹחַם chez Qohélet (72-108). Première conclusion: «le נֹחַם devant Dieu désigne l'homme à qui Dieu est favorable, sans connotation morale, c'est-à-dire sans référence au principe de rétribution, mais sans que l'homme puisse comprendre le dessein de Dieu à son égard» (81). Quant aux tournures מִן נֹחַם..., elles servent à exprimer des conseils portant sur des actions positives à préférer. Ces conseils contrebalancent concrètement les mauvaises occupations que le sage observe parmi les humains. À propos de Qo 7,18, M.M. (99) exclut toute influence hellénistique sur la pensée de Qohélet. Sur ce point, aurait été utile une confrontation avec L. Mazzinghi, «Qohelet tra giudaismo ed ellenismo. Un'indagine a partire da Qo 7,15-18», dans *Il libro di Qohelet. Tradizione, redazione, teologia* (éd. G. BELLIA – A. PASSARO) (Milano 2001) 90-116 (l'ouvrage est cité par M.M. dans sa bibliographie, 188).

L'étude du bien et du bonheur selon Qohélet appelle une analyse des sept passages où, depuis R.N. Whybray, «Qohelet Preacher of Joy», *JSOT* 23 (1982) 87-92, l'on reconnaît un contrepoint important aux observations du mal et du mystère dans la vie de l'homme. M.M. est d'ailleurs revenue sur ces textes lors du *Colloquium biblicum lovaniense* de 2002: «Qohelet et les sept refrains sur le bonheur», dans *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (éd. F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ) (BETL 168; Leuven 2003) 259-267. Assez curieusement, M.M. ignore la position originale et contestataire d'A. Schoors, «L'ambiguità della gioia in Qohelet», dans le volume cité plus haut *Il libro di Qohelet*, 276-292 (A. Schoors faisait partie du jury de thèse de M.M.: cf. sa page V). Quoi qu'il en soit, on appréciera les longues analyses de ces «refrains», dont je relève ici quelques points forts. «Plutôt que de se soucier de “créer” son bonheur [...], il convient de se réjouir du bonheur, même éphémère, en sachant qu'il vient de Dieu» (125). «Ce rappel de la proximité de Dieu dans le quotidien le plus humble de l'homme (boire, manger, être heureux dans/pour son travail), ajouté à la transcendance et la beauté de son œuvre (Qo 3,11), doivent amener la créature à la crainte de son Créateur (Qo 3,14), qui est aussi reconnaissance. Cette crainte permet alors d'allier le respect de la transcendance à l'amour d'un Dieu proche et présent» (132-133). À cet égard, la citation de V. D'Alario, répétée (avec quelques fautes) aux notes 370 et 372, est concordante, mais je doute que Qo 3,11 parle de la beauté de l'œuvre du Créateur: Dieu fait tout à point nommé, au moment propice. Quant à Qo 3,1-8, j'hésiterais à parler de déterminisme (132), car, pour le sage, le temps me paraît être beaucoup plus un problème métaphysique. Enfin, — et ceci est à retenir, — il y a tout au long de cette série de refrains sur le bonheur une progression que M.M. met bien en lumière, en particulier grâce à son schéma des pages 149-150, et, dans cette progression, le thème du jugement est un des apports du dernier de ces

refrains (Qo 11,9), leur apogée (147 et 171). Que penser de ce jugement de Dieu sur l'agir de l'homme?

Le troisième chapitre traite donc du mal et du bien à la lumière du jugement de Dieu (151-173). Quatre textes de Qohélet sont ici concernés: 3,16-22; 8,5-7; 8,11 et 11,9, tous considérés non seulement comme authentiquement l'œuvre de Qohélet, mais surtout formant une série en progression. Chacun de ces textes est analysé de la même façon que ceux qui occupent les chapitres précédents. À propos du mot שִׁמְחָה de Qo 3,16, M.M. suit D. Michel qui y voit le Tribunal divin (153-154 et 159) et elle explique fort bien (160): «Qohélet ne sait ni comment, ni quand, la justice divine s'exercera, pas plus qu'il ne peut expliquer l'œuvre de Dieu (Qo 3,11). Mais son incapacité humaine à rendre compte de ces phénomènes qui le dépassent n'entraîne pas automatiquement qu'il ne croie pas en eux, notamment en la justice de Dieu». À propos de Qo 8,5-7, déjà commenté aux pages 57-61 sous l'angle des conseils utiles pour éviter le mal, M.M. explique que «l'homme ne sait ni comment, ni pourquoi un tel jugement aura lieu, et cela accroît le mal qui pèse sur lui (Qo 8,6b-7)» (165); seul le sage, — et Qohélet en est un, — «connaît le temps et le jugement» (Qo 8,5b): Qohélet rend compte ici, comme dans toute son œuvre dont c'est le but, «de sa foi, de sa certitude» (166). Peut-on aller plus loin et «explicitement en quoi consistera le jugement» (166)? C'est en Qo 11,9 que, selon M.M., la réponse est donnée: «le jeune homme devra rendre des comptes à Dieu de l'usage qu'il aura fait des dons divins que sont la vie et ses bienfaits, dans son quotidien» (169); on peut comprendre ce passage comme un résumé de l'éthique du livre de Qohélet: «réjouis-toi, mais sois raisonnable, et [ne dépasse pas] le cadre de ce qui est possible» (169-170, citation de G.S. Ogden). En résumé (171), M.M. reprend la thèse de N. Lohfink qui parle de «Revelation by Joy» (cf. *CBQ* 52 [1990] 625-635) et elle conclut: «Le Dieu de Qohélet est un Dieu bon et proche, qui donne la vie et la joie, et non le malheur. A l'homme de l'accepter, et de rendre bonnes par son agir quotidien les occupations que Dieu lui donne (Qo 1,13)».

Le chapitre conclusif (174-182) montre quelle est, pour l'auteure de cette recherche, la «démarche existentielle» de Qohélet. Suivent en appendice la bibliographie et quelques index, mais pas celui des auteurs cités.

Cette étude frappe par la vigoureuse cohérence de sa démonstration. Par son attention aussi aux détails du texte de Qo, par l'ampleur de la confrontation aux travaux exégétiques des dernières décennies, par l'influence enfin exercée sur l'auteure par le maître de Francfort. Sur quantité de points, notre accord est total. J'ai relevé ceux qui me paraissent moins sûrs. L'optimisme traverse le livre de M.M., mais je reste convaincu que Qohélet est aussi un homme blessé qui cherche comment cicatriser ses plaies et M.M. montre comment il le fait.

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Otto MULDER, *Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50. An Exegetical Study of the Significance of Simon the High Priest as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers in Ben Sira's Concept of the History of Israel* (JSJSup 78). Leiden, Brill 2003.

Anliegen der aus dem Niederländischen übersetzten und revidierten Fassung der von P.C. Beentjes betreuten Dissertation (Utrecht, 2000) ist die Sicht des Hohepriesters Simon bei Sirach, insbesondere die Bedeutung von Sir 50 im Kontext des Väterlobes Sir 44–50. Mulder optiert dabei methodisch für eine je unabhängige Auslegung der hebräischen (Ms B) und griechischen Version des Textes (24). Die syrische und lateinische Fassung finden als nicht unabhängige Übersetzungen nur gelegentlich Erwähnung.

Das Einleitungskapitel (1-24) bietet in der sehr knappen Forschungsgeschichte zu Sir 44–50, gegliedert nach den Textfunden von 1896 und 1964, Hinweise auf Studien zu Form und Gattung des Väterlobs (Baumgartner, 1914; Mack und Lee, 1986) sowie auf Einzelbeiträge zu Kult, Priestertum, Eschatologie und zur samaritanischen Frage im Kontext von K. 44–50. Die bereits mehrfach genannte Textproblematik des Sirachbuches wird abschließend nochmals skizziert.

Ein erster Schritt der Untersuchung gilt der Position Simons als Höhepunkt im Väterlob selber sowie in der Gesamtstruktur des Buches (25–59). Auf der Suche nach Alternativen zu bisherigen unbefriedigenden Lösungen der Frage einer Gesamtstruktur zieht Mulder kodikologische Beobachtungen zu Ms B und dem Masadateext (Überschriften; Zählung der Kola; Umfang von Texteinheiten/Seiten) sowie die 'Ich-Passagen' heran und kommt zu folgender Gliederung des Buches in 6 größere literarische Einheiten: 1,1–13,25; 14,1–23,27; 24,1–33,18; 33,19–39,12; 39,13–42,14; 42,15–51,30; von den 6 Abschnitten sind 5 Sammlungen weisheitlich in Form und Inhalt, die letzte (42,15–43,33; 44–50; 51) ist hymnisch. Eine große Dreiteilung würde aus 1,1–23,27; 24,1–42,14; 42,15–51,30 bestehen. Für die Gliederung des Väterlobes mit K. 50 als Abschluss verweist der Autor auf 'demarcation texts', die die Abfolge der Gestalten durch einen Wechsel in der literarischen Form unterbrechen und so jeweils einen gewissen Abschluss bilden. Diese die Geschichte gliedernden Texte sind 45,25e–26c; 47,22a–f; 48,15a–16b; 49,4a–6b; 49,14a–16b, wodurch 3 größere Abschnitte (Henoch – Pinhas; Josua – Salomon; Salomon – Nehemia) zu je 61 Zeilen gegeben sind. Die durch das Stichwort *tp'rt* angeschlossene Darstellung der Herrlichkeit Simons in K. 50 umfasst ebenfalls 61 Zeilen, die sich in 3 in Form und Inhalt unterschiedene Teile gliedern: die Darstellung Simons mit Doxologie (50,1–21.22–24), die Scheltrede (50,25–26) und den Epilog (50,27–28). Die kurze syntaktische Analyse betont die zentrale Position Simons als handelndes Subjekt, dessen Lob die Einheit zusammenhält, sowie den für die Struktur des Kapitels entscheidenden Satzsatz 'Die Furcht YHWHs ist Leben' (50,28); die literarischen Einheiten von K. 50 (50,1–4.5–10.11–14.16–19.20–21.22–24.25–26.27–28) ergeben sich durch verschiedene Perspektiven der Darstellung Simons innerhalb 50,1–21, sowie durch den Wechsel zur Doxologie 50,22–24 und zu Ben Sira als Subjekt in 50,25–26.27–28.

Das Korpus der Studie (K. 3) gilt Simon in der hebräischen Fassung des

Buches (60-261), beginnend mit der Diskussion textkritisch schwieriger Stellen und einer Auslegung der sogenannten ‘demarcation texts’: bemerkenswert daraus das Festhalten an der *lectio difficilior khnyk* für 49,14a: your priestly service – als Brücke zu K. 50; Henoch (G, Syr) wäre spätere Adaptation. Die Auslegung von Sir 50 (102-259), die Vers für Vers den kleinen Einheiten folgt, bringt eine Fülle sprachlich-literarischer sowie inhaltlicher Details mit manchen Vorschlägen neuer Verständnis-möglichkeiten; sie zeigt auch oftmals die Originalität Ben Sira’s im Umgang mit der alttestamentlichen Tradition. In 50,1-4 (Simon als Bauherr) wird die genannte Wasseranlage mit den zwei Reservoirs von Bethesda identifiziert. Die kosmischen Bilder für Simon als Hohepriester 50,5-10 stellen ihn als Repräsentanten der universalen Weisheit dar (vgl. 24,4-9), ebenso die Bilder aus der Pflanzenwelt. Eine Stellungnahme gegen Kalenderpositionen von priesterlichen Henochgruppen vermag Mulder (gegen B.G. Wright) nicht zu erkennen; Sirach ist an der Einheit im Jerusalemer Priestertum gegenüber den Samaritanern interessiert. Eine zentrale These der Studie betrifft Simon beim Fest in 50,16-19: in der Diskussion, ob es sich um den Yom Kippur oder um das tägliche Tamidopfer handle, schlägt Mulder (168-175) einen neuen Zugang vor. In mehreren Elementen des hebräischen Textes sieht er Hinweise auf Rosch Haschanah als Tag des Gedächtnisses am Beginn der 10 Tage vor dem Versöhnungstag und dem Laubhüttenfest: dies ist das 16a-d erwähnte priesterliche Blasen der Trompeten als Zeichen der Erinnerung vor dem Höchsten; Num 10,10; Lev 23,23-24 in Verbindung mit der Tempelrolle 11Q19c.XXV,2-4, mit Kalendertexten aus Qumran (4Q320.321) sowie der Synagogenliturgie scheinen diese Perspektive zu stützen. Das Väterlob mit der Darstellung Simons als Abschluss wäre (neuer) Inhalt der Feier des Tages des Gedächtnisses und die Gattung von Sir 44-50 ein ‘remembrance discourse’ (175-220). Im Kontext der Erinnerung zu Beginn des Festmonats wird die Fortsetzung liturgische Darstellung einer Theophanie im Lied als (Donner-)Stimme (18a) und darüber hinaus im Licht (18b) des Höchsten. Aus der Doxologie 50,22-24 ist die universale Perspektive der Erwählung Israels (gegenüber Tendenzen der Gruppe Esras) sowie der Eifer des Pinchas als Kriterium der Ausübung des Priestertums bemerkenswert. Für die Integration des Scheltwortes 50,25-26 gegen Nachbarn Judäas, insbesondere gegen Sicheim als Reaktion auf samaritanische Ansprüche auf ihr älteres Heiligtum verweist der Autor neben dem bekannten Wort von Sicheim als ‘Stadt der Unverständigen’ (Test Levi 7,2) auch auf den Text über Josef 4Q372 sowie auf ein Fragment 11Q14 (232.238.357).

Völlig neu ist die Interpretation von zwei Formulierungen aus dem Epilog: die Wiedergabe von *mwšl ’wpnym* in 50,27a mit ‘mastery of wheels’ als Zeugnis der Vertrautheit Ben Siras (und Simons) mit der *merkabah*-Tradition (zusammen mit 50,5b.9b) und seines Wissens um die ‘verborgenen Dinge’ (42,19). 50,27c bleibt Mulder bei der schwierigen Lesart *bptwr lbn* von Ms B und übersetzt ‘in pure elucidation’, d.h. die Lehre des Weisen ist *lbn* — unverfälscht, rein (gegen die *lectio faciliior et communis lbw*).

K. 4 gilt Simon in der griechischen Fassung (262-316). Nach Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von G und Urtext sowie zu Reiterers Studie zu 44,16-45,26 folgt die Auslegung der ‘demarcation texts’ mit Blick auf die Unterschiede zwischen H und G. K. 50 ist in G durch das Fehlen des Motivs

der Herrlichkeit Simons (vgl. H 50,1a) vom Zusammenhang mit K. 49 (Adam) deutlich abgehoben. Die Umstellung von 50,2-3 in G (Tempel vor dem Wasserreservoir; Fehlen des königlichen Palastes) mag Distanz zu den Hasmonäern andeuten. Gewichtigster Unterschied sind zweifellos Fortsetzung und Zusammenhang von V. 14 mit dem in H fehlenden V. 15 über die Weinlibation, den Mulder als Interpolation des Enkels betrachtet, im Sinn einer Deutung als Teil des täglichen Opfers (Tamid IV,12b; VII,3). Auch die liturgischen Aktivitäten von 50,16-19 G fügen sich in den Rahmen des Tamidopfers. Weitere Details der Konzeption von G sind in 50,24 die Ersetzung von Simon und Pinhas durch die Bitte um das ursprüngliche Ideal des Friedens für die Gegenwart, in 50,25-26 die Erwähnung von zwei Gruppen (Samaria, Sichem) als Andeutung der sozialen und religiösen Spaltung der Gegner Jerusalems zur Zeit des Übersetzers.

K. 5: Simon, der rechte Hohepriester (317-373) fasst als Summe der Studie Bilder und Züge Simons (H und G) zusammen. Neben der fehlenden Klimax von K. 49 zu K. 50 betreffen inhaltliche Änderungen in G das Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Volk, das Gottesbild, die Zukunftsorientierung sowie Tempel und Priesterdienst zwischen Ben Sira und dem Enkel. Die Rekapitulation von Zügen Simons aus H bzw. G betont u.a. das Anliegen der Einheit des Priestertums in H (ohne Hervorhebung der Probleme von Leviten u. Zadokiden); der in G fehlende Eifer des Pinhas wird als Distanzierung von zelotischen Einzelnen unter den Pharisäern verstanden. In der Diskussion um die Identität Simons in K. 50 (344-354) optiert Mulder (gegen VanderKam, 1995) in kritischer Beurteilung der Aussagen bei Josephus für Simon II und dessen Identifikation mit Simon dem Gerechten als letztem der Männer der großen Versammlung (Pirke Abot 1,2). Weitere Indizien dafür sind in der Studie Verbindungen der Gedankenwelt Ben Siras als Sofer und Simons als Hohepriester, u.a. die notwendige Zusammenarbeit zwischen beiden in der Deutung und Anwendung der Tradition sowie in der Stellungnahme gegenüber den Samaritanern, mit denen es zwei Generationen später zum endgültigen Bruch kam.

Die Studie zu einem sowohl strukturell als auch thematisch gewichtigen Kapitel des Sirachbuches bietet neben C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A non-biblical Sourcebook* (London – New York 1996) 38-84 nun einen zweiten exemplarischen Vergleich zwischen H (aufgrund von Manuskript B) und G, der die drei sehr unterschiedlichen Abschnitte von Sir 50 als ein Ganzes zu verstehen sucht. Neben der Detailexegese sei vor allem auf Diskussion und Lösungsvorschlag zum K. 50 zugrundeliegenden liturgischen Geschehen, auf die starke Einbeziehung der Geschichte und Rolle der Samaritaner zum Verständnis von Aussagen Sirachs zum Priestertum sowie des verschiedenen politisch-religiösen Kontextes für die Versionen von H bzw. G hingewiesen.

Größere Wiederholungen (Samaritaner: 221-241.304-309.354-362; Priestertum: 337-340.340-344) gestalten die Lektüre des umfangreichen Werkes manchmal mühsam; auch die Position Mulders ist nicht immer einfach zu entdecken, so z.B. zur Kalenderdiskussion (125-131) oder das exakte Verständnis von 50,27a. Eine erste Frage zu Details der Studie wäre — neben der erst mit 1896 einsetzenden Forschungsgeschichte — die vorgeschlagene Gliederung des Buches mit Zäsuren nach 33,16-18 und nach

39,12 (37.47): 33,16-19 entsprechen dem Abschluss von 24,30-34 und ein Einschnitt erst nach 39,12 übersieht, dass 39,12.14c-15 mit 39,32-35 durch ihr Vokabular als Einleitung und Schluss die rahmende *inclusio* des Hymnus bilden (vgl. J. Liesen, *Full of Praise. An Exegetical Study of Sir 39,12-35* [JSJSup 64; Leiden 2000] 26-29.32-33.172). Zur sehr komplexen Frage der Auswertung kodikologischer Beobachtungen wäre hinzuweisen auf J. Oesch, "Textdarstellungen in den hebräischen Sirachhandschriften", *Auf den Spuren der schriftgelehrten Weisen*. Festschrift für Johannes Marböck (Hrsg. I. FISCHER – U. RAPP – J. SCHILLER) (BZAW 331; Berlin 2003) 307-324. — Der gewiss beachtenswerte neue Vorschlag für das Neujahrsfest als Liturgie in K. 50 basiert auf der Präferenz für den hebräischen Text von Ms B und der starken Gewichtung der Elemente des Trompetenblasens und des Gedächtnisses in V. 16, während der nur in GSyr bezeugte V. 15 mit dem Motiv der Weinspende als Interpolation betrachtet wird; d.h. es liegt an der Entscheidung für die Priorität eines Textes, sofern Sirach tatsächlich ein konkretes Fest beschreiben wollte! Sehr frag-würdig bleibt m.E. auch, ob Sirach in 50,27a sein Werk und seine Tätigkeit öffentlich als 'mastery of wheels', d.h. als tieferes Wissen im Sinn der merkabah-Tradition charakterisieren wollte; besonders in der Beschreibung Simons in 50,5b.9b.11.22 (248) vermag ich diese Perspektive nur schwer zu sehen. Ob im Fehlen des Pinhas in G 50,24 ein Hinweis auf einen Ersatz für Priestertum und Tempel durch den Tempel von Leontopolis zu sehen ist (339), scheint vom Gewicht des Tempels in Jerusalem als Stätte der Weisheit auch in G 24,10 fraglich (vgl. auch das Gebet K. 36!). Wenn gerade der Enkel in 50,1 gegenüber H den von den Hasmonäern beanspruchten Titel Hohepriester verwendet, ist dies m.E. ein Zeichen der Akzeptanz einer geänderten Situation.

Insgesamt hat Mulder eine Studie mit vielen neuen Gesichtspunkten vorgelegt, die die Diskussion um diesen Text bereichern aber wohl nicht abschließen.

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Mario LIVERANI, *Oltre la Bibbia. Storia antica di Israele*. Roma – Bari, Laterza, 2003. xv-510 p. 14,5 × 21. € 24,00

La Bible est-elle un monument littéraire ou un document historique? Si l'Ancien Testament est un monument littéraire, date-t-il entièrement de l'époque post-exilique (et même hellénistique pour certains) ou contient-il des matériaux plus anciens? Et s'il s'agit d'un document historique, est-il inexorablement falsifié par l'idéologie de ses auteurs ou bien fournit-il des matériaux qu'un historien honnête peut utiliser pour reconstruire une histoire d'Israël selon les critères de l'historiographie moderne? Voilà quelques-uns des dilemmes que doivent affronter aujourd'hui exégètes et historiens du Proche-Orient ancien. Il n'est plus possible, en effet, d'écrire une histoire d'Israël en prenant comme fil conducteur le récit biblique, au moins à partir

des patriarches, en partant du présupposé que ces récits doivent reposer sur des faits historiques. M. Liverani avait été l'un des premiers à dégager le «vice de forme» d'une telle entreprise qui s'appuie sur un axiome théologique: la foi biblique s'enracine dans des événements historiques; *ergo*, ces récits doivent avoir un fondement historique (cf. *OrAnt* 15 [1976] 145-159). Depuis lors, tout le monde connaît le débat, souvent animé, pour ne pas dire envenimé, qui oppose les «minimalistes» aux «maximalistes», termes forgés par W.G. Dever. Parmi les publications récentes à ce sujet et en particulier à propos des positions de «l'école de Copenhague», on pourra se référer entre autres aux ouvrages de L.L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' Be Written?* (JSOTSS 245 – European Seminar in Biblical Methodology; Sheffield 1997) ou, d'une tendance plus classique, V.Ph. Long – G.J. Wenham – D.W. Baker (eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of 'Biblical Israel'* (Grand Rapids, MI 2002); et, plus radical encore dans la défense des positions traditionnelles, W.G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK 2003). On se souviendra aussi du récent ouvrage de I. Finkelstein – N.A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed. Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York 2001) et du débat qu'il a suscité.

Où se situe M. Liverani dans ce panorama? D'une part, il entend bien ne pas paraphraser la Bible, même pour la critiquer. Il prend acte des discussions récentes sur le sujet et des résultats de la recherche historique, entre autres sur le règne de David, et il maintient de façon convaincante que les récits bibliques ne peuvent plus nous servir de canevas lorsque nous cherchons à écrire une histoire d'Israël. En second lieu, il entend tenir compte des résultats de la critique littéraire des textes et de leur datation. Il refuse enfin le scepticisme de ceux qui, influencés par les théories post-modernes du langage, nient la possibilité même d'écrire une histoire d'Israël. L'entreprise est possible, entre autres grâce à l'archéologie et aux nombreux documents du Proche-Orient ancien qui sont désormais à notre disposition.

La grande nouveauté de ce livre est dans son plan. Il se divise en deux parties principales intitulées «histoire normale» et «histoire inventée». Dans la première, l'A. reconstruit l'histoire d'Israël à partir du XII^e siècle jusqu'à la chute de Jérusalem en 585 avant notre ère. Dans la seconde, il étudie la période de l'exil, du retour et de la reconstruction jusqu'à la réforme d'Esdras pour laquelle il propose la date de 398 avant notre ère. C'est durant cette période que la majeure partie des récits bibliques a été rédigée et il est certainement intéressant de mettre en parallèle les vicissitudes de l'exil et du retour avec les grands corpus narratifs de l'Ancien Testament. Certes, le choix des titres et sous-titres suscitera la surprise chez les uns et la perplexité chez les autres. Toutefois, le lecteur comprendra vite que les titres ont la même fonction que les affiches publicitaires et qu'il faut donc se garder de juger le produit sur cette seule base.

Le but de cette recension ne peut être de résumer l'ensemble de l'ouvrage — entreprise de toute manière impossible —, ni même de fournir une liste des principaux résultats de l'enquête. Sur bien des points, M.L. concorde d'ailleurs avec les recherches les plus récentes dans le domaine, entre autres celles de I. Finkelstein. C'est ainsi qu'il parle de l'ethnogenèse d'Israël à

partir des populations autochtones vivant dans les collines. Il n'y a donc pas eu de conquête ou d'invasion, ni de sédentarisation lente de populations venues du désert ou d'ailleurs, ni même de révolution paysanne. Il n'est plus possible pour l'historien de parler au sens strict de l'époque patriarcale, du temps de l'exode, du séjour au désert, d'établissement dans la Terre Promise ou du temps des Juges. La formation des royaumes de Saül, puis de David et de Salomon est un autre sujet qui requiert beaucoup de prudence. Si M.L. ne doute pas de l'historicité de ces personnages, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai qu'il faut beaucoup redimensionner les récits bibliques au sujet de l'empire de David et de Salomon. Il s'agissait davantage d'une chefferie locale dont il est resté peu de traces en dehors de la Bible elle-même. Durant les périodes suivantes, il faut insister sur l'importance, au plan de l'histoire internationale, du royaume du Nord, en particulier sous les dynasties d'Omri et de Jéhu. L'histoire biblique est en effet écrite du point de vue de Jérusalem qui a repris le flambeau après la destruction de Samarie en 721 avant notre ère. Il est sans doute intéressant de savoir qu'avant l'afflux des réfugiés du nord, la ville de Jérusalem devait compter plus ou moins mille habitants et elle occupait un espace de cinq hectares environ (169-170). L'époque d'Ézéchias et celle de Josias sont de toute première importance pour le développement du royaume de Juda. C'est à partir de ces deux règnes que le Sud devient un centre politique, religieux et culturel pour «tout Israël».

Il est un autre apport essentiel du livre de M.L. et c'est la masse d'informations qu'il nous fournit sur l'évolution démographique, économique, commerciale, politique et sociale des populations qui occupent le territoire de l'ancienne Palestine. Ses connaissances d'archéologue, d'épigraphiste et de linguiste lui sont d'une toute première utilité pour ce faire. Les notations sur l'évolution des idées sont tout aussi passionnantes. Sans pouvoir tout mentionner, signalons au moins l'analyse des différences entre les sociétés urbaines organisées autour du palais royal et les sociétés tribales organisées sur base généalogique; les diverses possibilités pour la reconstruction d'Israël après l'exil: la monarchie, les vieilles institutions tribales («anciens», assemblées, «juges») et le système de la ville-temple, sur le modèle babylonien; les différences entre les temples égyptiens et babyloniens d'une part et les temples palestiniens de l'autre; l'opposition politique et culturelle entre ceux qui sont restés en Judée et ceux qui reviennent d'exil (cf. H.M. Barstad, L.L. Grabbe); l'apparition de visions du monde plus individualistes et plus universalistes lorsque «Israël» perd son autonomie, que les familles et les clans se retrouvent dispersées dans un immense empire et que le peuple doit trouver d'autres bases pour conserver son identité; la nécessité, après l'exil, de trouver une tradition «nationale» plus ancienne que la monarchie et que la possession de la terre.

Il faut enfin souligner les mérites de l'approche méthodologique de M.L. Il montre d'une part qu'il est possible d'écrire une histoire d'Israël sur un ton serein sans devoir, de gré ou de force, chercher à résoudre des problèmes exégétiques ou théologiques que la méthode historique en tant que telle n'est pas à même d'affronter avec les instruments qui sont les siens. Par ailleurs, il libère l'exégèse et la théologie bibliques d'une série de présupposés conscients ou inconscients sur l'historicité ou l'arrière-fond historique des récits bibliques. Plus précisément, il montre que récits bibliques n'entendent

pas offrir un compte-rendu circonstancié des événements passés tel que le ferait un historien moderne. Si Gunkel pouvait dire qu'il n'y a pas d'Homère biblique, nous pouvons dire également qu'il n'y a pas d'Hérodote ou de Thucydide bibliques malgré les louables efforts d'un J. Van Seters pour nous persuader du contraire. La seconde partie de l'ouvrage de M.L. montre toutefois qu'il est possible de situer les récits bibliques dans un cadre historique, en grande partie postexilique. S'ils ne sont pas des documents historiques au sens propre du terme, ils n'en sont pas moins des témoignages incomparables sur l'époque durant laquelle ils ont été rédigés. Cette façon de procéder est certes exemplaire et on ne peut que féliciter l'auteur pour sa rigueur scientifique. Elle comporte aussi quelques difficultés dont il est tout aussi conscient et, pour terminer, nous voudrions signaler l'un ou l'autre de ces problèmes.

Tout d'abord, la distinction entre «histoire normale» et «histoire inventée» est très nette au plan méthodologique, mais il est sans doute moins facile de la maintenir dans certains cas concrets. M.L. utilise d'ailleurs assez souvent les sources bibliques lorsqu'il reconstruit l'histoire «normale», surtout à partir de la monarchie. L'histoire «inventée» véhicule donc un certain nombre d'éléments qu'un historien sérieux peut utiliser pour reconstruire cette histoire «normale». Par exemple, les récits patriarcaux ont été organisés à une époque tardive, mais ils dérivent de traditions qui sont évidemment d'origine palestinienne (289). La tradition de l'exode peut très bien avoir conservé le souvenir de la fin de l'hégémonie égyptienne (bronze tardif) qui a permis à la région palestinienne de retrouver son autonomie au début de l'âge du fer (306). Pour décrire les routes du désert, les récits bibliques ont réutilisés des éléments provenant d'itinéraires commerciaux ou militaires, de routes de transhumances ou de pèlerinages (310). Les récits de la conquête, au contraire, ne nous renseignent que sur l'idéologie de leurs auteurs (316). Le livre des Juges contient quelques récits qui plongent leurs racines dans un terrain historique solide (entre autres Jg 4-5 et 9) (329-330). Le règne de David et de Salomon n'appartient pas au domaine de la légende (104-109; 347), même si ses dimensions «bibliques» correspondent davantage à celles de la province de Transeuphratène qu'à la réalité. Il n'y a pas non plus de raisons de douter que Salomon ait construit un temple de YHWH à Jérusalem (364). La loi qui a fourni au peuple ses coordonnées alors qu'il ne disposait plus de territoire et d'institutions propres, c'est-à-dire à l'époque exilique et postexilique, ne peut pas non plus avoir été «inventée» de toutes pièces parce qu'une nation ne peut vivre sans lois et que les normes juridiques et morales se fondent en général sur d'anciennes traditions (381). Il serait sans doute intéressant d'approfondir la question et de montrer quels sont les critères internes et externes qui permettent de distinguer dans l'histoire «inventée» ce qui peut faire partie de l'histoire «normale». Toujours est-il que «l'invention» dont parle M.L. est un concept qu'il nuance tout naturellement au cours de la discussion et qui est sans doute assez proche de l'*inventio* latine. Car, comme chacun sait, dans le monde antique en général et dans le monde biblique en particulier, une tradition doit être ancienne pour être valable et acceptée. «Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme» disait le chimiste Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier (1743-1794). Le principe pourrait très bien s'appliquer à bon nombre de traditions bibliques, car la

Bible connaît plusieurs techniques de «réécriture».

Il est un autre point de détail parmi d'autres qui suscitera sans doute quelques discussions. Parmi les sources possibles de l'histoire «normale», M.L. cite à plusieurs reprises les «inscriptions royales» qui ont dû exister en Israël comme ailleurs dans le Proche-Orient antique. La chose peut surprendre parce qu'aucune inscription de ce type n'a jamais été retrouvée en Israël, terre qui, comme chacun sait, a été fouillée plus qu'aucune autre. Une seule inscription datant de l'époque royale a été retrouvée intacte jusqu'à ce jour, et c'est l'inscription de Siloé, plus précisément de la galerie creusée sous Ézéchiass pour amener l'eau à la piscine de Siloé. Or, cette inscription ne parle pas du roi. L'idée de M.L. reste donc assez hypothétique.

L'ouvrage est muni de nombreux plans et tableaux; le texte ne contient pas de notes, mais une abondante bibliographie, sans doute plus à jour à ce qui concerne les recherches historiques que les recherches exégétiques, ce qui est assez normal d'ailleurs. Signalons seulement, sur l'autorisation impériale perse, J.W. Watts (ed.), *Persia and Torah. The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (SBL Symposium Series 17; Atlanta, GA 2001). Outre la bibliographie, l'ouvrage comprend de nombreux index: noms de personnages et de divinités, noms géographiques, termes cités (langues anciennes), tables et figures. Il est certain que parmi les nombreuses histoires d'Israël sur le marché toutes ne sont pas de même valeur, mais celle de M.L. est certainement à classer parmi les meilleures et les plus à jour.

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Novum Testamentum

Larry W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. xxii-746 p. 16 × 24. \$55.00 – £39.95

This book provides a painstaking and monumental study of the place of Jesus in the religious life, beliefs and worship of Christians from the beginning of the Christian movement down to the late second century. An outstanding investigation of the origin and development of the earliest Christian devotion to Jesus, *Lord Jesus Christ* should finally replace Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* (original German 1913; English trans. 1970) as the standard work on the subject. Widely respected for his previous contributions to the study of the New Testament and Christian origins, Hurtado gathers an impressive range of

evidence to show that the first Christians saw and revered Jesus as divine. In their patterns of belief and worship, there was an «overlap» between Jesus and God. This unprecedented Christ-devotion included both honorific claims and devotional practices, and began amazingly early. From the very opening years of the Christian movement (i.e. ca. 30-50 A.D.) Jesus was incorporated into the devotional life and worship of early Christians and in other striking ways associated with God. In fully venerating the crucified and risen Jesus, the earliest Christians did so in ways that also affirmed the primacy of God the Father.

Bousset himself had firmly distinguished between a supposedly original ethicizing piety of Jesus (and of the primitive Palestinian community of Jesus' followers) and the Christ cult of the Hellenistic Christian community. Hurtado effectively rebuts Bousset and all those who still follow Bousset's lead and argue that devotion to Jesus as divine did not go back to the original Christian groups of Jewish Palestine but appeared subsequently in Hellenistic communities of Christians in Antioch, Damascus or Tarsus, places where Christians were more susceptible to the pagan religious environment. In various ways Hurtado shows the fatal weaknesses in this thesis of a gradual divinization of Jesus or progressive Hellenization of an earlier and purer form of Christianity.

The *Kyrios* title is a key piece of evidence in Hurtado's case. Against Bousset and others, Hurtado argues convincingly that this title does not represent a major christological innovation among Gentile Christians who supposedly appropriated the title from pagan cults. The invocation formula *maranatha*, preserved by Paul in 1 Cor 16,22, illustrates how acclaiming and invoking Jesus as Lord happened in Aramaic-speaking Christian circles as well as in Greek-speaking ones. The formulaic invocation of Jesus as divine *Kyrios*, reflected in several Pauline passages (e.g., Rom 10,9-10; 1 Cor 12,3; Phil 2,9-11), testifies to a general, non-controversial characteristic of earliest Christian practice. Add too the fact that references to Jesus as Lord in Paul's letters frequently involve allusions to Old Testament passages (e.g., Phil 2,9-11; 1 Cor 8,5-6) and even appropriation of biblical language about God (e.g., Rom 10,9-13). These allusions and appropriations of language used of God confirm (1) that the *Kyrios* title derived from Jewish religious vocabulary (and not from mystery cults and/or emperor veneration), and (2) that Christians thought of Jesus as on a par with God, called *Kyrios* by Greek-speaking Jews and the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew tetragrammaton (Yahweh).

In associating Jesus with God as the rightful recipient of cultic reverence (e.g. Phil 2,6-11), the earliest Christians reconfigured Jewish monotheistic faith and practice and did so in an unprecedented way for which we can find no parallel in prior Jewish religious practice. These devout Jews produced a distinctive and variant form of exclusivist monotheism, in which the divine status of Jesus was expressed in terms of his relationship to the one God (1 Cor 8,6) and Jesus was revered as divine *Kyrios* to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2,11). What led these Jews, whose monotheistic stance forbade the divinization of human figures, to reformulate radically their exclusive worship of Israel's God and take the totally unusual step of treating Jesus as also the rightful recipient of cultic worship (e.g. Phil 2,6-11)? This striking

innovation in Jewish religious tradition, Hurtado maintains, must be ascribed not only to the impact of Jesus himself but also to such powerful and revelatory religious experiences as the appearances of the resurrected and exalted Christ (now known to be enjoying unique heavenly status), to (other) experiences understood as prompted by the Holy Spirit (e.g. 1 Cor 12,3), and to the inspired interpretation of biblical texts.

In constructing his total case, Hurtado begins with the letters of St Paul, through which we can also glimpse the belief and practice of those who were already Christians (e.g. Rom 16,7) and apostles (e.g. Gal 1,17) before Paul's call/conversion on the Damascus Road. The Apostle's references to Jesus as the Son of God (which consistently used the Greek definite article) did not function simply to express the divinity of Jesus and to justify worship of him. Primarily they expressed Jesus' unique standing with God and God's close involvement in Jesus' redemptive work. After regarding Jesus as a false teacher who had justly suffered an accursed death, Paul came to recognize Jesus as the Son sent by God (e.g. Gal 4,4) and enjoying a uniquely favoured relationship to God. But it was applying to Jesus the reverential language for God as *Kyrios* that clearly signalled the momentous Christian innovation in monotheistic faith. Paul's Gentile converts followed Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in Judea/Palestine by addressing God in prayer as *Abba* (Rom 8,15; Gal 4,6) and Christ as Lord through the *maranatha* invocation (1 Cor 16,22). These two Aramaic prayer-expressions reflect the binitarian devotional pattern originating among Aramaic-speaking Christians and then promoted among the Greek-speaking Pauline churches.

Hurtado examines further evidence from Paul's letters. «Glory» was one of the most important attributes of God in the Old Testament. Paul proclaims Christ as the Lord on whose face the glory of God shines forth (2 Cor 4,5-6). Add too the appropriation of the Old Testament theme of «the Day of the Lord», the coming divine doomsday which the Apostle refers to the eschatological victory of Christ himself (e.g., 1 Thess 5,2; 1 Cor 5,5). In constructing his case for recognizing in the faith and practice of Pauline Christianity a veneration of Jesus as truly divine, Hurtado also expounds the passages which reflect belief in the personal pre-existence of Jesus (e.g. 2 Cor 8,9; Phil 2,6-8). Here he convincingly refutes the views of James Dunn who explains the first passage as merely the self-impooverishment entailed by Jesus' death on the cross and the second as referring solely to the actions of the earthly Jesus, whose self-sacrifice contrasts with the hubris of Adam in seeking to grasp divinity. Apropos of such pre-existence passages, Hurtado rightly stresses (1) that they include belief in Christ playing an active role as divine agent not only in redemption but also in creation (1 Cor 8,6), and (2) that Paul presumes that his converts are acquainted with the idea of Christ's pre-existence and accept it without argument.

Hurtado reinforces his case for the place of Jesus in the prayer and worship of Pauline and pre-Pauline Christianity by recalling the close connection between Jesus and God in the characteristic «grace and peace» greetings with which Paul opened his letters and the «grace benedictions» with which he concluded his letters. These salutation and benediction represent formulas in letters which were intended to be read out at liturgical gatherings of early Christian communities. They show how common and

uncontroversial it was to link Jesus closely with God as the source of the blessings invoked in Christian worship. Hurtado draws attention as well to ritual acclamations (e.g. 1 Cor 12,3) and to a remarkable act of identifying with Jesus and coming under his power: baptism in his name (e.g. 1 Cor 6,11). The Lord's supper (1 Cor 11,20) entailed believers enjoying fellowship with their divine *Kyrios*. In a remarkable way, prophetic oracles were attributed to the exalted Jesus, who was understood to be either the speaker or was identified as the source of the prophecies. On the basis of this and further evidence, Hurtado concludes that from the earliest decades of Christianity the reverence given to Jesus represented an extension of the worship of God.

In tracing the patterns of Christian Jesus-devotion in early Christianity, Hurtado focuses next on the faith and practice of Judean Jewish Christianity. He draws his data first from Paul who encouraged churches elsewhere to think of themselves as linked by a common faith with Judean Christians (Rom 15,27; Gal 2,7-10). Those Christians, while sometimes wanting Gentile Christians to observe the Torah, did not challenge the devotional practices by which Jesus was revered in Paul's churches. The cult of Jesus was a shared devotional pattern among Judean and Pauline circles. Next Hurtado, while sensitive to the difficulty about the traditions used by Luke in Acts, rightly highlights the significance of understanding «the Day of the Lord» (Acts 2,20) to be Jesus' eschatological appearance in glory and of appropriating for cultic reverence of Jesus the act of calling upon «the name of the Lord» (Acts 2,21). Such acclamation in worship of Jesus went hand in hand with using his name in baptism and for healing and exorcism. Experiences of the risen Jesus exalted into heavenly glory at God's «right hand» led to identifying Jesus as the transcendent Lord, invoked in worship and spoken of in biblical language used of God and God's future act of deliverance or judgment. Powerful religious experiences interacted with a prayerful scrutiny of the scriptural texts in prompting the reverence paid to Jesus in cultic devotion.

In tracing the further development of devotion to Jesus, Hurtado goes through the canonical gospels, collections of sayings, and various proto-orthodox and heterodox writings of the second century. The four canonical gospels, in particular, promoted and reflected the intense reverence to Jesus that characterized the Christian circles for which the authors wrote. Inevitably in a magisterial study of this length some details are open to debate: for instance, the view that early Christians understood Deut 21,22-23 as Jesus having «suffered the divine curse on behalf of others» (188; cf. 77). Certainly the Deuteronomy curse («cursed by God be everyone who hangs upon a tree»), originally directed against the corpses of dead criminals, was applied at the time of Jesus to those who suffered crucifixion. But in quoting this passage, Paul (Gal 3,13) omits «by God» and so avoids the suggestion of a divine curse. On the cross Jesus was cursed by the law and by those who administered the law, but not by God.

Throughout this wonderful study Hurtado reveals wide-ranging learning, appreciating, for instance, the work on Valentinian Gnosticism by Antonio Orbe, a scholar often neglected in the Anglo-Saxon world. Nowhere is the immense knowledge and balanced judgment of Hurtado better illustrated than when he discusses the Son of man sayings and the Synoptic sayings source Q.

Some Son of man sayings (e.g. those connected with final judgment) and the Q material (esp. its central claim that in Jesus the kingdom of God has come to decisive eschatological expression) reflect a functional overlap between Jesus and God. All in all, *Lord Jesus Christ* is to be welcomed as a truly landmark study in the area of early Christian devotion to Jesus.

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Eduard LOHSE, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Meyers Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament) Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2003, 423 p.

L'évolution actuelle des études pauliniennes fait que la plupart des commentaires des grandes collections ont dû faire une complète et sérieuse mise à jour. Ainsi en est-il de la collection KEK qui nous propose le *Römer* d'E. Lohse.

Comparé aux récents commentaires en date, énormes (tel le *Romans* de D. Moo, qui a plus de 1.000 pages), celui de L. reste raisonnable, et le lecteur lui sait gré de ne pas fournir une information pléthorique. Clair, rigoureux, très au fait des recherches récentes (par ex. sur l'épistolographie, la rhétorique, la sémantique, mais aussi sur le milieu du NT) et sachant les utiliser à bon escient, L. est proche du chef-d'œuvre. Il réussit au demeurant à bien étayer la thèse qui parcourt et colore les analyses, et selon laquelle Rm serait une somme — autrement dit, un exposé complet et ordonné — de l'Évangile de Paul: Rm 1,18–4,25 présenterait l'Évangile comme révélation de la justice de Dieu pour les croyants, Rm 5,1–8,39, comme révélation du salut et de la vie, Rm 9,1–11,36 situerait l'Évangile face au destin d'Israël, Rm 12,1–15,13 enfin, indiquerait ce que l'Évangile requiert de transformation chez les croyants.

La division de Rm qui vient d'être proposée n'est certes pas nouvelle : elle est *grosso modo* suivie par la plupart des commentaires. Ce qui est nouveau, c'est la manière dont celui-ci donne plus de poids à la progression de l'argumentation, aux preuves (*pisteis*) fournies par l'apôtre ainsi qu'à leur ordonnancement. Car décrire l'argumentation ne suffit pas, il importe aussi de s'interroger sur sa pertinence, en particulier pour les quatre premiers chapitres de la lettre. Si Paul entend présenter son Évangile, pourquoi commence-t-il comme il le fait, en développant le thème de la colère divine? L'*incipit* de la lettre (Rm 1,1–17) laisse en effet entendre que le thème principal en sera l'Évangile. Or, juste après avoir déclaré qu'il ne rougit pas de l'Évangile, «puissance de Dieu pour le salut de quiconque croit» (1,16) et révélation de la justice divine pour quiconque croit (1,17), l'apôtre ajoute: «En effet, la colère de Dieu se révèle du haut du ciel contre toute impiété et toute injustice des hommes» (1,18), phrase qui va déclencher un discours sur le juste jugement divin (Rm 1–3). Rm 1,18 est relié à ce qui précède par un «en effet»

('), donnant à entendre que la révélation de la colère divine est associée à l'Évangile, qu'elle en fait même partie. En serait-elle donc le premier mot? Le message évangélique doit-il commencer par annoncer la punition des pécheurs? À n'en pas douter, Rm 1-3, tout centré qu'il est sur la révélation de la colère divine, soulève des questions décisives sur la manière dont Paul conçoit la présentation de l'Évangile, et un commentaire digne de ce nom ne peut pas ne pas examiner longuement, minutieusement pourquoi Paul a procédé ainsi.

Et puisque, de la rhétorique paulinienne, le *Römer* de Lohse ne retient pas seulement la *dispositio*, mais aussi l'ordonnancement des preuves, comme on vient de le dire, ajoutons qu'il aurait sans doute fallu présenter brièvement et nerveusement la logique et la dynamique de chaque unité rhétorique, pour que le lecteur puisse en saisir les enjeux théologiques et autres. Prenons un exemple. Comme on le sait, en Rm 1-3, Paul organise ses preuves selon une progression nette: (a) les premières (Rm 1,19-32) sont les faits (passés et présents) montrant que Dieu a exercé et exerce toujours sa justice punitive, (b) une deuxième vague de preuves, les *logoi*, présente les *critères* à partir desquels cette justice rétributive s'exercera au jugement final (Rm 2,1-25), (c) s'appuyant sur les faits et les *logoi*, une troisième vague de preuves, scripturaires (recours à l'autorité), peut enfin dire pourquoi la justice divine doit s'exercer pour tous les humains, juifs et non juifs, de la même façon (Rm 3,1-18). Si la ligne d'ensemble de l'argumentation est assez simple, les *pisteis* sont en revanche presque toutes difficiles. Le point le plus délicat de l'argumentation est constitué par la preuve scripturaire de Rm 3,10-18; non que Paul ait tort de solliciter l'Écriture — il le devait, car Dieu seul connaît les cœurs (principe énoncé en Rm 2,16) et peut déclarer sans se tromper que tous sont pécheurs —, mais c'est sa manière de l'utiliser qui fait problème. En effet, le centon de citations semble ne s'appliquer qu'aux païens, dont le Ps 13 (LXX) dit qu'ils dévorent le peuple de Dieu; la déclaration «Il n'y a pas un seul juste, pas un seul» s'appliquerait à eux seuls (les oppresseurs du peuple de Dieu) et non à tous les humains, selon l'interprétation qu'en donne l'apôtre. Or l'universalité est ici nécessaire, car elle détermine la portée de l'argumentation de Paul. En effet, s'il existe des juifs justes (au moins quelques uns), au cœur fidèle, vraiment attachés à la Loi, l'exception juive (eu égard à la colère divine), que Rm 1-3 veut pourtant supprimer, demeure, et l'argumentation de Rm 1-3 échoue en son entier. L'exégèse du passage ne doit donc pas seulement être descriptive, paraphraser ce que Paul dit, mais sonder la pertinence et la validité du centon de citations. Pour que la preuve scripturaire vaille donc, il lui faut s'appliquer aussi à *tous* les sujets de la Loi, en les incluant dans la catégorie des pécheurs. Or, si le 13,1-3 ne vaut que pour les païens, une autre citation, en Rm 3,15-17, celle d'Is 59,7-8, désigne manifestement les israélites, et son extension est totale: tous (voir en particulier Is 59,4) y sont accusés par l'oracle divin d'être dévoyés. En mettant ensemble des passages bibliques complémentaires, l'apôtre ne peut ainsi être accusé de malmenier les Écritures, qui jouent donc bien ici leur rôle d'autorité ultime, car elles seules pouvaient déclarer apodictiquement tous les hommes pécheurs — au sens fort, ennemis de Dieu voués à la perdition — sans exception aucune. Pour nous résumer, ce travail

de vérification de la pertinence des *pisteis* pauliniennes doit être fait tout au long d'un commentaire, et c'est sans doute un des impératifs à fixer pour ceux encore à venir. Cela dit, s'il reste à mi-chemin entre la description et l'examen critique des *pisteis*, le *Römer* de Lohse trace la voie, avec discrétion mais aussi avec sûreté, et on lui en saura gré.

Toujours à propos de Rm 1–4, signalons (140-145) un excellent excursus sur ce qu'il est convenu désormais d'appeler la *new perspective*, autrement dit l'interprétation représentée par E.P. Sanders et ceux (J.D.G. Dunn, H. Räisänen, etc.) qui ont épousé ses idées en les prolongeant en des directions pas toujours convergentes. Pour Rm 7,7-25, Lohse suit avec raison l'interprétation inaugurée par Kümmel: le passage ne parle pas de ceux qui sont en Christ, mais de ceux qui sont sujets de la Loi (215). Dire le contraire consisterait à rendre totalement incohérente l'argumentation de Rm 5–8. Mais les commentaires ne peuvent ignorer que beaucoup de chrétiens lisent le passage en pensant qu'il décrit leur propre situation, tant ils se sentent englués dans la chair, incapables de bien, etc. Il importe donc de voir pourquoi l'interprétation a pu glisser ainsi, et de se demander si Paul réécrirait aujourd'hui de la même façon.

L'exégèse de Rm 9–11 met bien en valeur la progression de l'argumentation. Les Juifs ayant rejeté l'Évangile, pour des raisons d'ailleurs diverses, sont-ils rejetés, seront-ils privés du salut? Paul se garde bien de commencer en accusant ses coreligionnaires; il préfère partir du dessein divin, certes paradoxal, mais inchangé, celui de faire grâce et miséricorde à tous (Rm 9,6-29); seulement ensuite il aborde la question de la désobéissance d'Israël (Rm 9,30–10,21), et après l'avoir énoncée — en réalité, très astucieusement l'apôtre fait énoncer cette désobéissance par Dieu lui-même (à travers les oracles prophétiques) —, il en vient à la Bonne Nouvelle vers laquelle tendait toute la section, à savoir que l'endurcissement d'Israël a paradoxalement permis aux païens d'accueillir l'Évangile et d'entrer dans la dynamique du salut, et qu'Israël lui-même sera finalement sauvé (Rm 11,1-32). La partie négative (la désobéissance) est ainsi prise en tenaille par des développements positifs qui la relativisent, et c'est le mérite du présent commentaire de le rappeler. Mentionnons seulement quelques choix exégétiques: en Rm 10,4 le mot *ἡ* est rendu par le terme *Ende* (292), quant au mystère, son contenu est entièrement positif, puisqu'il culmine avec le salut de tout Israël (319). Eu égard à la question d'un possible salut sans Christ pour Israël, la réponse du commentateur est claire: Jésus Christ est médiateur du salut de tous, Israël et les Nations (322).

Le lecteur du *Römer* de Lohse doit savoir le grec, il doit aussi connaître assez bien le monde culturel d'alors et ses règles (linguistiques, stylistiques, rhétoriques), le milieu social et religieux, car le texte qu'il a sous les yeux y renvoie sans cesse, mais sobrement — trop peut-être: pareille sobriété ne facilite pas le travail de celles et ceux qui sont moins au fait des multiples questions historiques, littéraires, etc. Malgré ses dehors faciles et limpides, le texte d'E. Lohse suppose un lecteur très compétent.

Paul TREBILCO, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (WUNT 166). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004. xxiii + 826 p. 16 × 23,5. €165,00

Sulla scia di altri contributi precedenti sul giudaismo e sul cristianesimo in Asia Minore — tra i quali ricordiamo *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (MSSNTS 69; Cambridge 1991) —, Paul Raymond Trebilco (1958-) ha pubblicato nella prestigiosa collana *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* il presente saggio sul cristianesimo primitivo ad Efeso, dalla prima evangelizzazione fino ai tempi di Ignazio. Nonostante in passato lo studio del cristianesimo delle origini ad Efeso sia stato piuttosto sottovalutato dai neotestamentaristi (2), di recente è stato affrontato in alcuni studi degni di rilievo, recensiti in maniera essenziale nelle pagine iniziali del volume (2-4): M. Günther, *Die Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Ephesus* (Arbeiten zur Religion und Geschichte des Urchristentums 1; Frankfurt am Main 1995); W. Thiesen, *Christen in Ephesus. Die historische und theologische Situation in vorpaulinischer und paulinischer Zeit und zur Zeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe* (TANZ 12; Tübingen 1995); R. Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (BZNW 80; Berlin 1996); H. Koester, "Ephesus in Early Christian Literature", *Ephesos Metropolis of Asia. An Interdisciplinary Approach to its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (ed. H. Koester) (HThS 41; Valley Forge 1995) 119-140 e H. Koester, "Ephesos und Paulus in der frühchristlichen Literatur", *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions, Wien 1995* (hrsg. H. Friesinger – F. Krinzinger) (DÖAW.PH 260, Archäologische Forschungen 1; Wien 1999) 297-305. La rapida panoramica dell'A. si conclude con la constatazione che i risultati dell'indagine condotta in tali contributi sulla vita delle comunità cristiane di Efeso esigano molteplici chiarificazioni e interpretazioni differenti, che egli intende offrire nel suo volume (4).

Biblista di formazione, professore di teologia e capo del dipartimento di teologia e di studi religiosi all'Università di Otago, Dunedin (New Zealand), Trebilco spazia nelle sue pubblicazioni da temi legati alla cosiddetta «terza ricerca sul Gesù storico», a problemi concernenti la relazione tra la sacra Scrittura e la tradizione ecclesiale, fino ad approfondimenti sul *background* giudaico e greco-romano del NT. Non solo: i suoi interessi si focalizzano anche su aspetti più specifici degli Atti degli Apostoli, dell'epistolario paolino e degli scritti giovannei.

Nella presente monografia l'A. espone gli esiti delle sue approfondite ricerche su un argomento che risulta di grande interesse per gli studiosi dell'epistolario paolino, della letteratura giovannea e, più in genere, per i neotestamentaristi e gli esperti di antichità cristiane. È noto, infatti, che, «come conseguenza della caduta di Gerusalemme seguita alla prima rivolta giudaica del 66-73 d.C., l'Anatolia è diventata forse il centro geografico più importante del cristianesimo nel mondo antico» (D.E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* [WBC 52A; Waco 1997] 131). In particolare, «la Chiesa in Efeso fu la più importante dell'Asia Minore e forse la Chiesa più influente del mondo alla fine del primo secolo d.C.» (G.R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* [NCB; London 1974] 73).

Consapevole della centralità di Efeso nell'orizzonte del cristianesimo delle origini, l'A. si prefigge due scopi: prima di tutto, "schizzare ciò che le nostre fonti ci dicono sulla vita e l'attività dei primi cristiani in Efeso" (4); e, secondariamente, mostrare "che c'erano diversi gruppi o comunità di cristiani nella città", dei quali è utile "descrivere dettagliatamente alcuni aspetti della vita" (5).

Coerente con questo duplice intento, l'A., fin dalla prima parte del libro, finalizzata a presentare il cristianesimo primitivo efesino, prima e durante la missione di Paolo (53-197), rileva l'esistenza, intorno al 55 d.C., di una stabile comunità paolina, sorta grazie all'attività evangelizzatrice dell'apostolo. D'altra parte, scopre alcune tracce della presenza nella città di altri gruppi cristiani, autonomi rispetto a Paolo.

La seconda (197-350) e la terza parte (351-627) del volume, dopo aver raccolto dati soprattutto dalle Lettere Pastorali, dalle Lettere di Giovanni e dall'Apocalisse di Giovanni, tratteggiano le relazioni intercorrenti tra i destinatari di questi scritti neotestamentari. Resta così confermata l'ipotesi iniziale: nel lasso di tempo che va dall'80 al 100 d.C., pare che il cristianesimo efesino fosse costituito da almeno cinque componenti: la comunità cristiana di origine paolina, alla quale sono indirizzate le Lettere Pastorali; il gruppo di avversari dell'autore delle Pastorali; un'altra comunità di matrice giovannea, destinataria delle Lettere di Giovanni; il gruppo di "secessionisti" menzionati nelle Lettere di Giovanni; e, infine, i "nicolaiti" bollati dall'Apocalisse di Giovanni (2,6.15). In particolare, in maniera concorde con altri biblisti come R. Schnackenburg ("Ephesus: Entwicklung einer Gemeinde von Paulus zu Johannes", *BZ* 35 [1991] 41-64), Trebilco sostiene che la comunità paolina e quella giovannea erano ben distinte. Differenti sia nei comportamenti che negli atteggiamenti, le due comunità non avevano però rapporti ostili tra loro, come lasciano evincere i contatti linguistici tra le Lettere Pastorali e le Lettere di Giovanni. L'A. perviene così alla conclusione che le due comunità di Efeso, pur non fondendosi in una sola e pur avendo a cuore la propria identità, riconoscevano che anche i membri dell'altra comunità appartenessero a pieno titolo al cristianesimo (716-717).

Di conseguenza, Trebilco si oppone alla tesi propugnata da altri studiosi — come W. Bauer (*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* [ed. Robert A. Kraft – Gerhard Krodel] [Philadelphia 1971] 82-84; orig.: *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* [BHT 10; Tübingen 1934, ²1964]) —, secondo i quali, ad Efeso, nel I secolo d.C., le comunità cristiane di origine differente si sarebbero amalgamate in un unico gruppo, magari con il sopravvento di un gruppo sull'altro. Prendendo le distanze specialmente da Bauer, Trebilco porta invece varie ragioni per dimostrare che Paolo, nonostante non venga mai evocato nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni, non sarebbe stato soppiantato ad Efeso (714). Al contrario, nella città avrebbe continuato ad esistere una comunità di matrice paolina.

In secondo luogo, l'A. rifiuta l'opinione degli studiosi che ipotizzano la presenza ad Efeso di un determinato gruppo di cristiani, a cui sarebbe stata destinata l'Apocalisse di Giovanni. A suo parere, sia l'Apocalisse sia la Lettera agli Efesini di Ignazio — come dimostra la quarta parte del volume (628-711) —, sarebbero state indirizzate a tutti i cristiani della città.

Non è il caso qui di rendere conto dei numerosissimi dettagli offerti dal-

la presente monografia. Ci limitiamo a metterne in luce, anzitutto, il pregio fondamentale, che sta nell'aver delineato in maniera sistematica e approfondita il quadro della Chiesa di Efeso, nella cornice socio-culturale e religiosa della città (11-52). Per farlo, l'A. ha tentato di rispettare il più possibile la varietà dei dati reperibili negli scritti neotestamentari analizzati, nonché in numerose altre fonti coeve. Ha riportato così alla luce una situazione tutt'altro che monolitica e uniforme del cristianesimo efesino del I secolo d.C., costituito sostanzialmente da due "anime" — paolina e giovannea — e non privo di opposizioni interne e di tendenze scismatiche. Dei gruppi della Chiesa efesina l'A. ha cercato di mettere in rilievo, attraverso un'attenta analisi degli Atti degli Apostoli, dell'epistolario paolino, dell'Apocalisse di Giovanni, ma specialmente delle Lettere Pastorali e delle Lettere di Giovanni, svariati aspetti di comportamento e di autoconsapevolezza: l'uso dei beni materiali, l'incipiente struttura gerarchica e la relativa concezione ecclesiologica dell'autorità, lo *status* ecclesiale della donna, il modo di designarsi — e, dunque, di comprendersi — e, infine, il rapporto con la società.

Degno di rilievo, sia dal punto di vista della ricerca biblica sia per i suoi eventuali risvolti sulla vita della Chiesa odierna, è la constatazione insistente della diversità non conflittuale della comunità cristiana di matrice paolina rispetto a quella di origine giovannea. Del resto, l'A. sembra essere sensibile a questo aspetto particolare della vita della Chiesa primitiva e, in specie, al nesso intercorrente tra l'unità e la diversità all'interno del NT (cf P.R. Trebilco, "Orthodoxy, Scripture and Tradition", *Considering Orthodoxy. Foundations for Faith Today* [ed. P.R. Trebilco] [Orewa 1995] 97-123).

Certo: in qualche caso, le ricostruzioni storiche proposte dall'A. sembrano destinate a rimanere sul piano delle congetture. Ad esempio, egli suggerisce l'ipotesi che, quando Ignazio scrive agli Efesini, ossia tra il 105 e il 110 d.C. (631), sarebbe sorto un gruppo di cristiani di tendenza docetista, che si sarebbe sviluppato a partire dai "secessionisti" menzionati nella Prima e nella Seconda Lettera di Giovanni. Ma la Lettera di Ignazio non sarebbe stata indirizzata a questo gruppo (716).

Un altro caso in cui le congetture finiscono per prendere il sopravvento sui dati storicamente accertabili si trova nelle conclusioni del quindicesimo capitolo. A questo punto, Trebilco osserva: "In assenza di dati solidi, abbiamo suggerito che il numero di cristiani ad Efeso al tempo di Ignazio non fosse piccolo, ma piuttosto potrebbe essere appropriatamente descritto come *polypetheia* — una grande moltitudine" (711). Una volta costatata l'"assenza di dati solidi", onestamente riconosciuta dall'A., può sorgere però nei lettori l'impressione che la congettura circa l'ingente quantità di cristiani ad Efeso sia dovuta principalmente alla tesi propugnata dall'intero volume, secondo cui nella città sarebbero esistiti almeno i cinque gruppi suddetti, che ritenevano tutti di essere cristiani. Se sta questa tesi, diventa più che verosimile che ciascuno di questi gruppi, ricostruiti dall'A., dovesse avere una certa quantità di membri. In realtà, bisognerebbe semplicemente limitarsi a riconoscere che mancano i dati per pronunciarsi sul numero più o meno elevato dei cristiani efesini.

Forse, si potrà non condividere alcune prese di posizione dell'A., a riguardo delle quali egli lascia spesso trasparire un certo grado di ipoteticità. Anzi, ci sembra che si possa riconoscere che il punto debole del saggio sia pro-

prio il ricorso molto frequente ad affermazioni congetturali, ritmate da termini come “possible”, “probably” e “may be”. D’altro canto, non si può non apprezzare il notevole sforzo compiuto dallo studioso per presentare un quadro tendenzialmente completo del cristianesimo primitivo ad Efeso. Bisogna riconoscere, però, che talvolta tale sforzo è sproporzionato rispetto alle acquisizioni effettive a cui esso perviene. Emblematico, da questo punto di vista, è uno dei risultati della ricerca sugli Atti degli Apostoli: stando alle conclusioni del quarto capitolo, con le quali si chiude la prima parte del volume (53-196), le comunità domestiche sarebbero state significative nella vita cristiana di Efeso (196). L’affermazione sul ruolo fondamentale da esse giocato nella struttura del cristianesimo primitivo della città ricorre già nelle conclusioni del secondo capitolo (102). Un cenno alle comunità domestiche è reperibile pure nella sintesi del terzo (153). Ci sembra che questo dato storico sia così noto da non richiedere una sottolineatura tanto marcata.

Un secondo pregio del volume sta nel suo procedimento propedeutico: pur trovandosi di fronte ad un’ingente quantità di dati, i lettori riescono a non smarrirvisi perché l’A., ad ogni tappa dell’indagine, traccia una sintesi puntuale di fine capitolo, i cui esiti sono poi ripresentati in modo ancora più essenziale alla conclusione di ciascuna delle quattro parti dell’opera. Inoltre, i lettori possono anche consultare in maniera mirata il volume, utilizzando i suoi ottimi indici: l’indice dettagliato dei contenuti (ix-xxiii), quello analitico delle citazioni — Antico e Nuovo Testamento, opere giudaico-pseudoepigrafiche, qumraniche, Flavio Giuseppe, Filone d’Alessandria, scritti rabbinici, cristiani, letteratura antica e maggiori fonti di iscrizioni — (772-810), l’indice degli autori (811-819) e quello dei soggetti e dei luoghi (820-826). Infine, in vista di approfondimenti ulteriori, è offerta una copiosa bibliografia, in gran parte di lingua inglese (719-771).

Tutto sommato, l’opera mette a disposizione degli studiosi un’ampia indagine storico-biblica, le cui acquisizioni rimarranno punto di riferimento utilissimo per studi successivi, che ci auspichiamo siano capaci di pervenire a ricostruzioni storiche del cristianesimo efesino del I secolo d.C. sempre meno congetturali.

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G.W. LOREIN, *The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* (JSPSS 44). London - New York, T & T Clark International, 2003. xii-283 p. 16 × 24. £75.00

El presente estudio se sitúa en la línea de investigación de R.H. Charles (1920) y B. Rigaux (1932) que veían el origen y desarrollo de la figura del Anticristo en el interior del judaísmo, y, en concreto, del judaísmo tardío y la apocalíptica, si bien no consideraban que tal figura tuviese todos sus rasgos hasta la época cristiana. Se distancia en consecuencia de las viejas concepciones que recurrían a las mitologías irania (W. Bousset) o babilónica (H. Gunkel); y también quiere distanciarse de algunos estudios recientes que analizan dicha figura partiendo de que se trata de un oponente a Jesucristo y que sólo es comprensible como tema cristiano (G.C. Jenks, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* [BZNW 59; Berlin – New York 1991]; L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist A Tradition-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* [JSJSup 49; Leiden 1996]). Sin embargo, es a partir de un estudio anterior del mismo Lorein sobre el Anticristo en los Padres de la Iglesia (“The Antichrist in the Fathers and their Exegetical Basis”, *Sacris Erudiri* 412 [2003] 187-197) desde donde el A. propone una definición del Anticristo que le va a servir de guía a lo largo de toda su investigación: “El Anticristo es un hombre que aparecerá al final de los tiempos, totalmente lleno de Satanás. Será un astuto impostor, como tirano (injusto, asesino) y como falso dios (alejándose él mismo y a otros de toda religión). Otras descripciones del Anticristo son “hombre de iniquidad”, “bestia” y “falso profeta” (esto último solamente en su aspecto religioso)” (29). Establecida esa definición y contrastada con los puntos de partida de investigadores anteriores, Lorein va estudiando por orden cronológico los textos en los que, según él, aparecen los elementos que se han señalado en la definición. En el Cap. 2 analiza los pasajes de los apócrifos y pseudopégrafos del AT. (incluidos los deuterocanónicos para los católicos); en concreto Sal 152; Si 47; OrSib 3,388-392. 608-615; Judit; 1-3 Mac; SalSal; TestXII; OrSib 3,470-473. 76-77; Tratado de Sem; AsMoi; y 2 Hen. El Cap. 3 lo dedica a la literatura de Qumrán fijándose en *Pseudo-Ezequiel* (4Q386); *La mujer demoníaca* (4Q184); *Documento de Damasco*; *Pésher de los Salmos* (4Q171); *Testimonia* (4Q175,21-30); *Salmos de Josué* (4Q397,22); 1QH 11,12-18; *Pésher Nahún* (4Q169,3-4); *Pésher Habacuc* (1QpHab 2,1; 8,8; 12,7); *Libro de la Guerra* (1Q 33) completado con *Apócrifo de David* (4Q373) y *Apocalipsis arameo* (4Q550-551); y *Pseudo-Moisés* (4Q387). Algunos de estos textos ya habían llamado la atención de los estudiosos (cf. H. Burgmann, “Antichrist-Antimessias: der Makkabäer Simon?”, *Judaica* 36 [1980] 152-174), pero ciertamente sin haberlos integrado en el conjunto de la literatura de la época. Finalmente en el Cap. 4 contempla todos los datos obtenidos y ofrece unas síntesis sobre el tema y su desarrollo histórico, así como una valoración de los resultados de otros estudiosos y la conclusión de los suyos propios: “que el concepto del

Anticristo se encuentra completo en la literatura intertestamentaria; que el tema del Anticristo está unido al del Mesías (considerando la importancia de David y su historia en el desarrollo del tema del Anticristo); y que el tema no se encuentra más a menudo en los textos esotéricos que en los de carácter general o misionero” (241).

El estudio de Lorein es metodológicamente riguroso. Apoyándose en estudios de especialistas sobre cada uno de los textos, presenta primero el contexto histórico del escrito en cuestión; después analiza gramatical y literariamente el pasaje ofreciendo el texto original y la traducción inglesa; y por último deduce las afirmaciones contenidas sobre el Anticristo. Este último punto es el más original, pero también el que levanta algunos interrogantes.

Lorein ve ya el núcleo del tema del Anticristo, según su definición, presente en el AT (30-42), e incluso fuera del libro de Daniel. La ve en el falso profeta arquetípico de Dt 13,1-3, en la historia de David y Goliat en 1 Sam 17, y en el futuro pastor impío de Za 11,15-17. Pero salvo en este último pasaje, en los demás no son tan claras las dimensiones escatológicas y mesiánicas. Algo parecido habría que decir de Sal 152,4-6 y de Sir 47,4-5 con los que inicia el estudio de los Apócrifos. Tanto el aspecto escatológico como la dimensión mesiánica de estos textos no dejan de ser muy discutibles. El “abismo” del Salmo parece referirse sin más a la muerte, y el carácter tipológico de Sirácida parece más bien en línea de ejemplificación.

Dos textos considera Lorein de importancia decisiva para configurar el tema del Anticristo como un individuo entre los años 160-150 a. C. Por un lado en Egipto en las parte más antiguas de OrSib 3 donde, combinando los pasajes relativos al rey que subyugará a Asia (vv. 388-392) y desolará Egipto (vv. 608-615) con el que se refiere al rey que Dios suscitará para traer la salvación (vv. 652-656), descubre en el primero al Anticristo y deduce sus rasgos —acordes con la definición dada— por analogía con el segundo, de forma que “todos los elementos apuntan hacia el Anticristo” (57). Lorein se alinea con quienes no ven ahí de forma inmediata a Antíoco IV, lo cual no es evidente. Por otro lado recurre al libro de Judit, para mostrar que en Palestina hacia esa época está presente la idea del Anticristo. Considerado el libro como una narración metahistórica, afirma que en ella “hay suficientes indicaciones para justificar una comparación de las acciones metahistóricas militares y religiosas de Holofernes al servicio de Nabucodonosor con las acciones escatológicas políticas y religiosas del Anticristo bajo la influencia de Satán” (64). En realidad en Judit no se ve el elemento escatológico y, por otra parte, parece una comparación un tanto acomodada.

En el recurso a 2 Mac para descubrir rasgos del Anticristo bajo las figuras de Antíoco IV, Menelao y Nicanor, el mismo Lorein reconoce que “no están combinadas ni colocadas en un marco escatológico” (75), aun afirmando la mentalidad escatológica de los autores del libro. Por otro lado ve en *La mujer demoníaca* (4Q184) el precedente del “falso profeta” (Saw), mientras que H. Burgmann veía en cambio la alusión a un sumo sacerdote hasmoneo líder del grupo rival de la comunidad de Qumrán. Lorein aduce en esa misma época (130-70 a. C.) la referencia a “un hijo de Beliar” en el *Pseudo-Ezequiel* (4Q386), pero la brevedad del texto no permite sacar conclusiones. El momento más importante en ese período lo ve Lorein en el *Documento de Damasco* (107 a. C.) bajo las figuras de Saw y del “cabeza de los reyes de

Grecia” —que podría referirse a Trifón—, y en *Testimonia* (4Q175,23-26) con la alusión a “la persona maldita procedente de Belial” y a los dos que reconstruirán los muros de la ciudad (algo prohibido por Josué). En estos textos sí que está presente la perspectiva escatológica (o preescatológica como la llama Lorein entendiéndolo por tal cuando el autor lo ve presente en su propio tiempo); y, en el segundo, además, la contraposición al Mesías (185). Se pone justamente de relieve la diversidad de figuras en las que se representaría el Anticristo.

Las figuras históricas que aparecen en textos de la segunda mitad del s. I a.C. —Alejandro Janneo (4QpNa169,3-4), el “hombre de la mentira” (1QpHab 2,1; 10,9), el sacerdote impío (1QpHab 8,8; 12,7), Pompeyo (SalSal 2), Aristóbulo II (SalSal 17), etc.— reúnen según Lorein rasgos del Anticristo, si bien los autores de esos textos se sitúan, como advierte el mismo Lorein, en contexto preescatológico. En cambio las alusiones a Beliar en TestXII no se relacionan con el Anticristo ya que aquél se identifica con Satán, figura que Lorein, con toda razón, distingue cuidadosamente de la del Anticristo.

Lorein muestra con argumentos convincentes cómo la dimensión escatológica del Anticristo viene afirmada en IQM 1,3-5; 15,2-3 en la figura del “rey de los Kittim”, si bien no queda bien dilucidada la relación de éste con Gog o “rey del norte”, cuya figura Lorein distingue siempre de la del Anticristo. Esa misma proyección escatológica es mostrada en AsMoi 8 con el “rey de reyes”, cuyos rasgos reproducen el modelo de Antíoco IV, que actuará antes de que comience a cambiar la situación con la aparición de Taxo (AsMoi 9-10). Lorein aún añade como de esa misma época, en torno al cambio de era, el pasaje de 2 Hen o Henoc eslavo en el que Dios anuncia a Matusalén un período de terrible turbación universal antes del diluvio (2 Hen 70,5-7) en el que triunfará el Adversario.

Hay que agradecer a Lorein este estudio de pasajes de la literatura intertestamentaria, algunos de ellos no considerados hasta ahora en relación con el Anticristo, y que ciertamente ofrecen elementos que confluirán en el perfil de esa figura en posteriores representaciones. También se ha de valorar muy positivamente el haber integrado en su estudio los testimonios de los Apócrifos con los provenientes de Qumrán. Pero puesto que el estudio se plantea en torno a un período, aunque éste reciba el nombre de “intertestamental”, no habría estado de más incluir el Libro de Daniel que, como el A. señala repetidamente, tiene una importancia decisiva tanto en la proyección de Antíoco IV en la figura del Anticristo, como en la simbología animal utilizada para representarlo. En un estudio de este tipo no tiene que entrar en juego el carácter canónico de un libro.

Abordar el estudio del Anticristo como un “tema” puede llevar ciertamente a ver presentes los componentes de ese tema en pasajes en los que no aparece la figura del Anticristo como un personaje singular escatológico, y esta es la valiosa aportación del libro de Lorein. Sin embargo, el haber partido de una definición tan precisa —“como un hombre que aparecerá al final de los tiempos”— y aplicarla a cada uno de los pasajes estudiados no deja de producir la impresión de que tal definición es a veces algo superpuesto a un texto concreto. Es lo que sucede en lo referente a la dimensión escatológica, sobre la que concluye el A. que sólo en ella “los

datos intertestamentarios son más claros que los del Antiguo Testamento, y los del Nuevo Testamento más claros todavía, aunque es cierto que los datos intertestamentarios sólo llegan a ser realmente claros cuando se examinan a través de una definición basada en los Padres de la Iglesia” (230). Parece que es la idea que los Padres de la Iglesia tienen sobre la escatología y el Anticristo —por lo demás quizás no tan fácilmente reducible a unidad, sobre todo si se analiza el Nuevo Testamento— la que viene a marcar el sentido de los textos.

Por otra parte, en la definición del Anticristo propuesta por Lorein no entra el elemento “mesiánico” o de oposición al Mesías y a su obra. En el análisis de los textos sin embargo se ve cómo precisamente el contraste con el Mesías sirve para determinar los rasgos del Anticristo. Así sucede ya en los resultados que deduce de Sal 152,4-6 y Si 47,4-5, y más claramente en OrSib 3, 652-656; SalSal 17; AsMoi 8; 4QTestim y 1QH 11. A pesar de ello Lorein disocia ambos temas. Incluso reconoce en la Conclusión al libro que, ante su estudio, “quienes reclaman un Anticristo que sea un oponente a Cristo Jesús no estarán de acuerdo, ni tampoco aquellos que prefieran hablar del Anticristo sólo cuando es usada la palabra ‘Anticristo’” (242). Pienso que existe otra alternativa: precisamente la de enfocar el estudio del Anticristo en la intertestamentaria desde la óptica de los oponentes a las figuras mesiánicas en cualquiera de las representaciones que se dan en cada época. De esa forma se reflejaría con más claridad el sentido de cada texto en su contexto propio. Con todo, el libro de Lorein muestra, en efecto, que los elementos que configurarían el tema del Anticristo, en cuanto oponente humano a la acción escatológica de Dios a través de su “mesías”, están todos ellos presentes en el período intertestamentario; pero cabe preguntarse si se trata del mismo oponente (u oponentes) de los que habla la tradición cristiana tal como se deduciría de la definición propuesta. Ese oponente tiene sin duda dimensión escatológica (2 Tes 2), también preescatológica como sucede en la bestia y el falso profeta de Ap 13 y 17 que aluden a figuras históricas, e incluso de actualidad permanente como se ve en los “anticristos” de 1 Jn 2,18-19; 4,1-3. En definitiva no parece que el Anticristo sea una figura tan precisa como la presenta Lorein.

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David SHEPHERD, *Targum and Translation. A Reconsideration of the Qumran Aramaic Version of Job* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 45). Assen, Royal Van Gorcum, 2004. viii-317 p. 16 × 23,5. €79,50.

One of the vexed questions of biblical philology is that of the origins and date of the Jewish Aramaic Targums. Targums exist for all books of the Hebrew Bible except for Ezra-Nehemiah and Daniel (presumably because those books

are written partly in Aramaic), and several books, notably the Books of Moses, have more than one Targum. Jewish tradition, basing itself on Neh 8, 8, takes the phenomenon back to the time of Ezra, at least in regard to the Targum of the Pentateuch. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Targum, according to this same tradition, was the oral proclamation and exposition of the Torah in a liturgical setting, necessitated by the fact that knowledge of Biblical Hebrew had declined. Scholarly opinion for a long time broadly accepted the traditional picture. In recent years, however, serious challenges have been formulated as to the rationale and early function of the Targums. Dialectological study has shown that the Targumic tradition has Palestinian roots. In Palestine, however, an Aramaic translation for use in the synagogue would have been unnecessary, since Hebrew was still widely spoken in Second Temple times (see, e.g., A. Tal, "Is There a Raison d'Être for an Aramaic Targum in a Hebrew-Speaking Society?", *RÉJ* 160 [2001] 357-378). Moreover, in actual fact there are no early witnesses attesting the liturgical use of a Targum (see, e.g., Z. Safrai, "The Origins of Reading the Aramaic Targum in Synagogue", *Immanuel* 24/25 [1990] 187-193). The origins of the Targumic tradition may, therefore, lie in the house of study rather than the synagogue. A translation was the shortest possible form of commentary. The habit of public reading from the Targum during the synagogue service may have developed only at a later period, after the destruction of the Second Temple.

Part of the problem in researching the origins of the Targums is due to a lack of early manuscript evidence. The earliest manuscripts of the rabbinic Targums are from the 7th-8th century CE. The texts are certainly considerably older, but how much older is difficult to determine. On linguistic grounds, many scholars estimate that a written text of the earliest Targums, notably Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch, was fixed at some point during the period between the first and second Jewish wars. In this view, the oldest Targumic texts represent Jewish biblical interpretation of the Second Temple period. They may consequently be used to illuminate other Jewish writings from this period, notably the New Testament. Unfortunately, the late attestation of the rabbinic Targums leaves room for doubt, and indeed other scholars prefer not to use the Targums in order to retrace traditions of the Second Temple period.

In view of all these open questions, the discovery of fragments of Jewish Aramaic translations of biblical books (in particular of Job and Leviticus) among the Qumran scrolls has been saluted very enthusiastically by the scholarly world. Here, finally, was decisive and tangible evidence of the antiquity of the Targumic tradition — or so it seemed. The enthusiasm cooled somewhat when it was realized that the Aramaic translations recovered from Qumran were far from identical with the rabbinic Targums. Yet it remained possible to claim, on the basis of these fragments, that the roots of the Targum go back to the 1st century BCE at least. This claim is valid only to the extent that there is a real historical connection between the Qumran texts and the rabbinic Targums. Proving or disproving such a connection is very difficult. The work under discussion contributes to the elaboration of a correct methodology in solving the questions involved.

Shepherd's book is the revised version of a doctoral dissertation directed by Peter Hayman and Timothy Lim and defended at the University of

Edinburgh. The thesis it seeks to argue is that the Aramaic translation of the Book of Job partially recovered from Cave 11 in Qumran should not be considered a Targum in the specific sense of the word. It is an Aramaic translation of a biblical book and it is of Jewish provenance, but it does not exhibit a number of characteristics typifying the later Rabbinic Targums.

An introductory chapter retraces the main stages of the history of research on 11QTargumJob (11Q10), presents the central thesis, and spells out the way it will be verified. The methodological option is to compare the Qumran text with two other Aramaic translations of the Book of Job, namely the Peshitta and the Rabbinic Targum. The three texts are confronted with the received Hebrew text while other ancient translations, notably the Septuagint, are kept in view as well. Rather than comparing a stretch of text, the author opts for exploring a number of textual phenomena: omissions, transpositions and the treatment of the Hebrew conjunction *we*, 'and'.

Part I on omissions finds that while the Qumran text and the Peshitta omit a variety of elements for different reasons, the Rabbinic Targum omits elements only exceptionally.

Part II on transpositions, likewise, identifies numerous transpositions in the Qumran text and in the Peshitta of Job, while the Rabbinic Targum has no more than two instances of transposition.

Finally, the much shorter Part III, on the treatment of the *waw* conjunction, arrives at similar results: the conjunction is omitted or added more often in the Qumran text and in the Peshitta than in the Rabbinic Targum, and it is occasionally rendered by a different conjunction in the two former texts but never in the latter.

In a concluding chapter, the results are further evaluated. The possibility of a common source text for the Qumran version and the Peshitta version is considered, but eventually rejected. Neither is there a relation of direct dependence between these two versions. Rather, the similarities between them are of a typological nature. Both the Qumran text and the Peshitta tend to give in to the requirements of their respective target languages. The Rabbinic Targum, on the other hand, is wedded to the principle of providing an exact account of all the elements contained in the Hebrew source text.

His analyses and discussions lead the author to the conclusion that 11Q10 is not to be considered a Targum. Somewhat unexpectedly, this conclusion is not arrived at by arguing that the Qumran text lacks the characteristic freedom of Rabbinic Targums. On the contrary, the argument runs, it is the rather free attitude to the details of the source text that sets the Qumran text apart from the later Targums, and brings it closer to the Peshitta. This methodological point is well taken and may have interesting implications for several other issues in the field of biblical philology, notably the problem of the so-called 'Targumic' nature of the Septuagint. At the same time, a number of questions are left open: what is the rationale of Targumic adherence to the letter of the Hebrew text? When did this translational approach come into being? And is adherence to the details of the source text the only defining characteristic of the Targums? Exact rendering of all elements of the source text is also found in the Greek translations of Theodotion and Aquila: are these, then, to be considered Targums? The analogy of the Greek versions also shows that greater faithfulness to the wording of the source text can be introduced in the

course of a revision. Indeed, Theodotion and Aquila are generally considered to be reworkings of the less literal Septuagint. This opens the door to the hypothesis that an earlier “Targum” not exhibiting the attention to detail typical of the rabbinic Targums was later brought into line with new exigencies. Admittedly, it is much easier to ask such questions than to find an answer, and one has to start somewhere.

On the whole, Shepherd’s study represents a solid piece of work. The author has assembled practically all the relevant literature. There is no reference to the following: Michael P. Weitzman, “Hebrew and Syriac Texts of the Book of Job”, *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995* (ed. J. Emerton) (VTS 66; Leiden 1997) 381-399; but the gist of this study can also be found in Weitzman’s monograph on the Peshitta, which is well exploited throughout the book. The numerous detailed analyses of single passages are competently conducted. The visual presentation is pleasing, and the indexes make it easy to find what one is looking for. A few mistakes subsist in the bibliography: Gideon Goldenberg is called ‘Goldberg’ (290), and Geoffrey Khan, ‘Kahn’ (291, also 131, 315); Florentino García Martínez is F. Martínez throughout the book, and Wilhelm Nebe becomes ‘von Nebe’ (295 and 202).

A final quibble is with the promotional text on the back cover, where the present work is described as ‘groundbreaking’. Many scholars knew, and several of them stated in writing (as is indeed recorded by Shepherd [19]), that the designation of 11Q10 as a Targum needed to be taken with a pinch of salt. It is nice to have a detailed investigation showing that 11Q10 is ‘un-targumic’ in specific details. But this conclusion does not exactly inaugurate a new epoch in biblical studies. The larger question of the relation between the Qumran ‘Targums’ and the later Rabbinic Targums remains largely undecided.

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